

# Intellectual Freedom :

OR,

## AN ESSAY

ON THE

*SOURCE and NATURE*

OF

## MORAL EVIL.

By RICHARD HAYES SOUTHWELL.

" Say, in this rapid tide of human ruin,  
" Is there no *rock*, on which man's tossing thought  
" Can rest from terror, dare his fate survey,  
" And boldly think it something to be born?"

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## P R E F A C E.



**P** R I V A T E converse with a Friend, who admitted the Scriptures to be true, gave occasion to the following Essay ; which, for the main part, was written several years since, and was then intended for private satisfaction only, and not for publication.

The subject itself is of considerable importance, and involves the weighty obligations of natural and revealed religion. I do not pretend to have placed the particulars of it in the best light, or removed those difficulties attending them, which have employed classic pens in vain, nor, to have described and reconciled the discordant notions, on some moral points, of different persons and nations. Many of its branches are but lightly touched on, and others treated only in a brief and general way, as my professional engagements prevented  
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their prosecution ; which the particular and social duties of man, with the relation and degrees of each ; as well as the virtues and passions, and above all the effects of Moral Evil, would have afforded copious matter for.

The correction may admit of improvement, being done amidst frequent interruption, in small and detached portions of time, and under other disadvantages. I make no apology for passing within the pale of Divinity, because the opinion of attic arrogance, which here strangely obtained, is almost done away, that made a man a Barbarian if he had not the honor to be born in Greece ; and its doctrines, since pontifical authority has lost its keys, no longer of private interpretation ; but may be considered as the public endowment of a great Commonwealth, in which mankind as denizens are interested, and to the benefits of which by the magna charta of Christianity, they have the right of free and equal access.

What I have offered, are rather the faint etchings, than the exact lineaments and personal shades of distinct characters ; and may therefore be regarded

## PREFACE.

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garded, as the *contour* only of a general picture, traced by a rude and hasty hand. However, such as it is, I now offer it to the Public as a *juvenile* production, and freely submit its fate to their *candid* and *impartial* judgment.

As the terms *natural* and *moral* are of extensive latitude, and frequently occur, I would guard their meaning and use by a few remarks. As they refer to the universal government of God, the one is used, to signify his usual care and œconomy of creatures destitute of reason and choice ; and the other, the method and laws of his proceedings with those possessed of both, and accountable for their conduct ; *i. e.* they regard the subjects of necessity and liberty ; and of course, the laws by which the vast scheme of Providence is carried on. When applied to the *attributes* of God, they do not intend a positive difference between them, whereby some are natural and others moral ; but are adopted as a customary mode of speech, to difference only their exercise and concern about moral and necessary subjects : for his attributes are all moral, and *vice versa*. As the terms concern man, they were useless before the

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the fall ; human *actions* did not then require to be so distinguished ; but from this, they are rendered suitable to indicate and express their true nature, relation, and difference. They also attach themselves, as relative terms, to those established *laws* to which all creatures are subject according to their respective natures ; and thereby, distinguish those actions in which we, as well as others, act as free agents, from those which are without choice, as digestion, feeling, growth, &c. As human corruption, with that which springs from the heart of man devoid of grace, is considered to be natural ; so the same term has a moral meaning, when it refers to the settled rules and fixt obligations of reasonable beings. In each case, when applied to created subjects, particularly to man, the one, generally, has respect to actions which are *necessary*, and the other to those which are *free*.

Evil is of two kinds, moral and natural ; the last consequent on the first, and the guilt of the first the creature's own. The unalterable difference between virtue and vice, with the unsullied attributes of God, argue the original purity and perfection of his works : the ability of the creature gives the  
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extent of the law ; and its authority, as well as aptitude to promote our well being, the degree of its obligation. Reason and interest enforce the belief and acknowledgment of a Supreme Being, and agree with revelation, as to the equity and goodness of his conduct in the formation and government of those amenable for their ways ; and the admission of this draws after it the use and advantage of religion while under the discipline of Providence, with the future and complete adjustment of all things. The truth, therefore, of what himself affirmed to Israel in particular, touching the justice of his proceedings, is here considered on a more extended scale : *O house of Israel, are not my ways equal ? are not your ways unequal ? Therefore I will judge you, every one according to his ways, saith the Lord God.*

“ Religion ! providence ! an after state !

“ *Here* is firm footing ; here is solid rock ;

“ This can support us ; all is sea besides.”

*R. H. S.*

PLYMOUTH-DOCK,

1798.






# INTELLECTUAL FREEDOM:

OR,

*AN ESSAY, &c.*



## CHAP. I.

*Of Evil in general, and its distinction from Error:—Some of the immediate causes of both:—Of Angels and Men; together with the original harmony, union, and perfection of Intellectual Nature.*

THE advantage and utility of distinguishing between Natural and Moral Evil, and of the both from Error, are so obvious  
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and important, that whosoever attends to and considers them attentively, must be convinced thereof. And although it is not that of a natural, but of a moral kind, which is intended to be the subject matter of the ensuing pages, yet before we enter on its consideration, it may not be useless, particularly for those who have not observed their difference, to discriminate between them, and point out their respective agents, and subjects, in order that we may have clear and distinct ideas of what is to be treated on.

By NATURAL EVIL, I understand, *whatsoever interrupts the usual order of material things; or takes from, or injures the esteemed happiness, of sensitive or animal nature.* Its degrees are in proportion to the loss or pain that it occasions. There is partial inconveniency or trouble, that arises from the natural efficiency of material causes, which is not immediately connected with morality, though sometimes directed  
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and over-ruled to its promotion : and there is natural evil, or inconvenience and trouble produced by man's own moral depravity, and unavoidable from the constitution of things ; wisely ordered by God to restrain or punish vice, and retrieve or secure the particular and universal good of such creatures. These two sorts of physical evil, the one arising from the present depraved course of the material world, and the other from wrong action in a commission of vice, may be considered apart, or as they commonly are, under one head and in union with each other. But as the latter has an immediate connexion with Moral Evil, which is the cause of its infliction, and as I shall have occasion to speak of it in the process of this Discourse, it will be most proper to consider them as disunited, for the sake of perspicuity and order. The former being under, and more immediately a concern of the natural government of God, is not much connected with our present subject : so that I shall say but little of its uniform laws and effects, or of the use,



use, influence, application, and result of them.

As to MORAL EVIL, I would observe in a brief and general manner, which will include all its modalities, that by it is to be understood, *Voluntary desire, speech, action or abstinence, contrary to reason, happiness, and truth; or in other words, to the known commands and established laws of the Deity, founded on the nature and relations of persons and things.* Which of course, as not being irresistibly impelled thereto, by any foreign cause or motor whatsoever, must belong to intelligent and free agents only; subject those who transgress, to the inconveniencies necessarily attendant on such an abuse of their elections; and be highly injurious to their present well-being, as also their chief end. There can be no moral obligations without knowledge, power, liberty of action, and opportunity. Impossible conditions are not obligatory.

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The alliance that subsists between moral *Evil* and *Error* is so strong, and the latter in general being productive of the former, has inclined some persons to imagine there are no innocent errors at all. But though in some cases it may be difficult, nay, impossible, to distinguish the one from the other, or to ascertain exactly where the boundaries of one end, and the other begin; yet, I cannot think it would be any breach of truth to assert, that there are some errors which are not criminal. What should we think of the man, who would attempt to persuade us to believe there is no day-light, because he could not find the exact place where the shades of night cease? Or, that a commixion of colours were but one, and one only, because he cannot distinguish them with his naked eye? Surely such errors, if no others, as have no near or remote influence on moral practice, may and ought to be exempted from the universal charge of evil, by all, even though jesuitical proficients with their science of casuistry and distinctive subtilties, should

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be posed, and at a loss to difference those who run into, and are blended with each other.

A mistake of the judgment, or a lapse of the understanding, if unaccompanied with a joint depravity of the will, is certainly not a moral evil, but an innocent and natural error, when arising from the original and natural limitation of the powers and capacities such beings are endued with; which, strictly speaking, is no impeachment either moral or philosophic of the wisdom, power, or goodness of the great Creator. To have formed and rendered rational creatures incapable of misconception, would have been perhaps to have placed them in the rank of gods, or in a situation, where they would not have been as now the subjects of morality.

The *mistakes* of men, with the degrees of criminality attached thereto, are in the eye of Omniscience real evils when they gain an *actual* ascendancy in the mind, and are accurately

accurately distinguished by him according to the degrees of such ascendancy, and their virtual opposition to the laws of obligatory proportion, or the natural fitness of things. This is clear from the spirituality of his laws, which take hold not only on actions but on thoughts also. But the only just criterion of them we have, is formed of such ethic principles and rules, as are generally allowed to arise from the settled obligations of reason, in union with the revealed truths of scripture; so that our judgment thereof must depend on their visibility, and agreement, or disagreement with such standard. And the *degrees* of guilt attendant thereon in the sight of men, not being known from the virulence or turpitude of any previous disposition, which existing only in the mind is concealed from their observation, are to be estimated from expressions, or the acts themselves, in proportion to the importance and number of known truths infringed thereby; or as they accord not with, and are opposed to the laws and duties of civility, humanity, safety, equity, religion, &c.

Errors

Errors in our present state spring from many causes, and in their turn become causes also, as common observation and sorrowful experience daily prove. To enumerate and give a complete catalogue thereof, to explore their respective sources (apart from the fall of man) and follow their meandering windings as they branch, unite, and divide, were the arduous attempt feasible, it would not from imperious circumstances be so to me. But *who can understand his errors?* *David.* Who can fully recount their number, and unravel them? who has a perfect knowledge of their rise, with their secret and mysterious workings? Nevertheless, let us proceed to notice, and remark on a few of the more obvious and subordinate *causes* of error, which are commonly found to generate moral evil, in order to clear the road, that we may ascend with greater freedom to the fountain head.

Prejudices imbibed in infancy and confirmed by education, or such as have been admitted in riper years, and are established by



by the authority of venerable custom, jaundice the mind and tincture the perception, disguise truth, and warp the judgment. Juvenile minds are more open and susceptible than others to the impressions of unrestrained fancy, which when warmed by simular affection, or heated by intemperate passion, are often led far astray. 'Tis generally in youth, (I wish I could add only then) we form hasty notions of persons and things, and by setting off wrong we cannot but wander in the paths of misconception and error; which are seldom trod back, or turned aside from, but by exceeding few. To revise settled notions and turn over the lumber of the brain, unlearn learning, and throw off the specious robe of confirmed ideas unwarily put on, is a task which even convinced reason is apt to recoil at, and studiously avoid as an herculean labor.

False perception is a principal source of error. This may be occasioned by the disguise or remoteness of things; superficial or confused thought; precipitancy or indo-



lence of disposition; the imperfect report, or the accidental or natural defect either of the senses, or the mental powers: but chiefly results from the want of close attention and cool examination.

Errors are unavoidable when men argue from an assumed and fallacious medium, or lay down a principle as certain that can scarce be negatively proved, and erect conclusions thereon which agree only with some favorite hypothesis: or, when they attend the shrine and fondly sacrifice to the idol mammon, ease, reputation, &c. regardless of *right* and deaf to the sacred voice of her entreaties. They are also found, at times, to originate in the railery of abandoned wit, when employed in putting truth out of countenance, or taking pleasure in the chambers of its own imagery: as well, as in the lordly dictates of the supercilious, by which they would fain supersede the rational utility of logical discourse. As to premeditated attempts, which arise from base and criminal design

to impose on the credulous and unwary, they betray a disposition of mind grossly wicked, which when detected, deserves not only public exposure, but general detestation. To the aforementioned causes, which operate mostly in a mixed way, I would briefly add, that others may be found in the ambiguity of phrases, and a spirit of innovation ; complicated views, and illegitimate deductions ; elasticity of spirits, and the eruption of passion ; the arts of sophistry, and self estimation ; the love of novelty, and an undue veneration for antiquity ; the influence of company, and the strength of temptation, despair, &c. with a careless acquiescence in the fallacy of such mediums as ought to be questioned and rigorously examined.

It may here however be objected, That these are but *subordinate* causes of error and evil, and not the *prime* source from whence they originate. Granted ; as also that they fall short of what I design, and may be considered as a few way-marks only of the declivous

declivous road to ruin. And therefore, in order to obviate this objection, as the subject is rather obscure, nay, veiled with darkness if viewed through the dim glass of ideal habit, custom, or imitation, I forbear to enlarge thereon, and proceed to search for a *first cause*, that shall be adequate to their developement on natural and allowed principles.

“ That to the height of this great argument

“ I may assert eternal Providence,

“ And justify the ways of God to men.”

The disregard our federal Head shewed to the Divine interdict, when he partook with Eve of the mortal fruit which effaced from their minds the moral image of the Deity, stripped them of paradisiacal rectitude, and marred their happiness, may with some propriety be looked on as the real source of Moral Evil; because, they thereby entailed on all their offspring the eccentric infirmities of their common nature, which are its secondary causes, and  
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their transgression gave birth to and introduced amongst mankind the pestilential Hydra, that now rears itself and hisses on every side. Our gracious Lord who in kind condescension to the weakness, stupidity, and negligence of men, always made choice of the most apt and expressive figures to awaken their consideration and convey useful and divine instruction into their minds, hath illustrated this subject. He compares the *world* to an extensive and open *field* that was sown with *good seed*. But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared *tares* also: *i. e.* an hurtful kind of vetches, and very unwholesome. So the servants of the household came, and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? He said unto them, *an enemy hath done this*. In the explication of this parable which refers to the world in general, and the visible church also, he informed his favored disciples, that the *enemy* he spoke of was the *Devil*. Matt. xiii. This is *the serpent*, that *beguiled Eve*  
*through*



through his subtilty. Paul. *She took of the forbidden fruit, and gave also unto her husband with her, and he did eat.* Moses. Now as Adam and Eve who were both *patients* and principal *agents* in their own transgression, wanted not the obsession and auxiliary persuasion of the great promoter of evil and father of lies, to induce them to contemn the prohibition which was the test of their fealty and obedience, I shall not confine myself to their defection alone; for the true source of Moral Evil is not to be *fully* known by this, neither can it be discovered by viewing the effects thereof among the visible creatures abstracted from Revelation, or by taking up any link in the wonderful series short of the first. In prosecuting the subject, therefore, let us observe and bear on our minds the affinity of the *cause* in heaven and on earth; the *connexion* between the transgression of angels and men; and the strong *analogy* there is betwixt the rudiments of them: for it is not on earth among men, but in heaven and among angels, that we must search for its first breaking

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ing forth, as all who credit the Bible must believe, by which we shall see that moral evil existed before it was experienced in paradise.

We are now to cast an eye back, and take a retrospect of some transactions which have taken place in the bright abodes of supernal glory,—of some amazing scenes discovered on the plains of light. This forms a subject for speculation at once splendid, interesting, and useful; and tends to display the wisdom and power, love and justice of the Author and Rector of the world. Herein we shall have no need to travel over the divided regions of the globe, nor desire admittance to the archives of any nation, to turn over the mouldering pages of their ancient and imperfect records in expectation of finding the Origin of Moral Evil. Scripture is express. It has in some degree undrawn the curtain between this and the other world, and the light of the latter beaming forth on the human mind, enables it to push forward its enquiries thither.

thither. It is to this alone we are indebted for what we know, not only of angels, but of all that relates to this abstruse pneumatic subject. Unassisted reason, endued with the most enlarged and active powers, could not have demonstrated the *certainty* of their being. For as in every acquisition of real knowledge, the mind must proceed from premises which are known, (an aphorism no one will dispute,) and as angels are of a spiritual nature, not subject to the cognizance of sense, nor acting as corporeal objects on the visure faculty, what position could be advanced, or ratiocination used, to determine the reality of their existence? and though reason might have assured us that the existence of beings different to and more exalted than ourselves was neither impossible, nor improbable, yet it could not without the aid of Revelation, have advanced any cogent proof or convincing argument that there were such beings in the whole compass of universal nature. The Grecian Sages and Eastern Magi, together with those of other cultivated nations,

as well as the ruder sort, were indebted, no doubt, for their belief of spirits other than human, to the same source,—to Revelation, conveyed to them, by corrupt and imperfect tradition ; though we may justly suppose, some of them endeavoured to realize ideal forms suited to credulous superstition, and impose on its votaries the floating phantoms of warm and fanciful minds.

Passing by the supposed orders of these beings in the celestial hierarchy,—the time of their creation,—and the subordination in their several ranks ;—with part of them being marshalled under Michael,—engaged in the fictitious battle of Milton,—and the improbable *reason* he has assigned for the revolt of those they were opposed to ;—we have to search for a cause that has more the appearance of truth, and that supported by probability has the evidence arising from a preponderancy of argument in its favor, and further than this we must not expect to go. An though the sanction of such an authority as that of Milton, would be of

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some weight in a discussion of this nature, who supposed their revolt commenced, in a refusal to comply with the behest of "Heaven's Almighty" in paying allegiance to his eternal Son; which makes the fallen angels as to the cause of their expulsion, not a whit more culpable than those persons who deny his Divinity; yet, as this at the most could be but a final cause, and not a very likely one neither, we renounce it for an antecedent, and shall endeavour to avoid making use of any argument however plausible, unless it comports with the natural order of things human and divine, as far as acquainted therewith.

The perfection and harmony, with the disposition, means and end of the moral and intellectual world, were certainly much greater, than some persons who from mistaken thoughts like the rash and haughty Arragon, have been willing to allow. As we form our estimate, or ought so to do, of things material from an examination of their fitness to answer, and in answering their intended



intended purposes, by viewing the order and proportion of their parts, mechanism, and laws ; so also ought we to enquire, as far as we can, into the relations, powers, and abilities of intelligent agents, together with their use and extent, design and application, in order to form just notions of the conduct of God in the government of his moral creatures. In the grand concatenation of created Being, we may reasonably suppose, an unspeakable variety strictly united ; for, who can admit of chasms, in the lovely and regular productions of an infinitely wise and perfect God ! As the system of material nature is sweetly combined, in a well adjusted fitness of its various parts, and different motions, as well as distinct unions, necessarily concur to form a connected and universal whole ; may we not infer with propriety, a similar concert, alliance, and amity in the intellectual system ? That the obligations arising from the order and relation of moral connexions, are reciprocally binding ? And that the true happiness of individuals, is inseparably uni-

ted with the welfare of the whole, and not capable of either independant or solitary enjoyment? If so, the analogy will hold good when applied to angelic beings: for order, union, and conformity to their respective obligations, are as necessary for their happiness, as for that of men; and as indispensable for these, as for the support and preservation of the volvent globes around us,

“ Such is the world’s great harmony, that springs  
 “ From Order, Union, full Consent of things.”

The common and general terms under which we comprize and arrange all the objects of our real, personal, or theoretic knowledge, are *body* and *spirit*. When we call our thoughts home and employ them in abstraction, precision, and comparison, and carefully notice the lively and varied operations that take place within us, (which are much more wonderful than any of those things that attract bodily vision) we necessarily find and become immediately consci-

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ous of an immanent principle of reason, knowledge, action, and sensibility; totally distinct from and different to the compages of the body. This is an high degree of evidence, and the chief ground of our assurance in most if not all cases. Hence we may gather tolerable ideas of a spiritual and corporeal nature:—of a thinking substance or a substance with the power of cogitation; and of a substance the reverse, compounded of matter and form, and entirely devoid of thought. These two, with their absolute and relative affections, constitute the materials of human science; and describe for aught we know to the contrary, the vast circle of the world. We know of no other natural substance, what degrees there may be in either, nor that their *substrata* really differ from their prime and distinguishing properties. *These* appear to be their constituent principles, and *those* to limit and engross our thoughts, be independent of each other, and inconvertible even in idea. Suppose the *soul* of man were to be deprived of a property or power, one

or more, or have others superadded and thereby changed from what it was before : —by *losing* some which are essential to its present character, it may no longer be a human spirit ; by having some *changed* it may become (considered apart from the body) a different intelligence ; or by others *superinduced* be so altered as to be more than human ; yet under each of these changes it would still be a *spirit*, as the *power of thinking* would remain, though an accidental or even an essential mode or power, one or more, should be lost or changed. So matter or solid extension may cease or be altered as to its particular form and visible composition, but it would still remain *body*, and as an individual substance retain its distinction ; and be as independent in that state on every created being, and as incapable of real transmutation as even spirit itself.

Man is a *complex* being, formed of body and spirit. These have no essential or innate power to affect each other, nor bond  
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of union apart from the will, appointment, and perpetual influence of the infinite and almighty Spirit, that pervades and preserves the course, order, and connexion of second causes. From the *univocal* operation of the established rules by which God governs, they are termed the laws or order of nature : and hence nature has been called the *art* of God. These rules circumscribe and influence all beings and things, whether simple or compound.

*Below* man in the scale of existence, there is a gradual descent to the lowest step of visible life ; and *above* him, we may reasonably conclude, a connected climax, with a greater variety ; enjoying according to their proximity to God, or rather elevation above man, an intellectual ascendancy. For though man is a distinguished link in the vast chain of being, we cannot suppose him in reality

“ *Midway from nothing to the Deity.*”

Because

Because, the degrees of distance between him and the least spark of true animation, are lost in the comparison, nay, are infinitely less than those betwixt him and God. So that it doth not appear impossible, but that the Divine fiat may have given birth to beings vastly varied and raising in the excellency of their natures, with consciousness and activity answerable thereto, so as to distance even human conception. For what can be conceived too refined and multifarious for the power and wisdom of Him to produce, whose absolute prerogative it is to possess and be a pure and simple Spirit in eternal act? Activity, as well as consciousness, or mental sensibility, is strictly united with, and congenial to the idea of Spirit.

This *union* and *variety* of created life, when duly considered, must raise in our minds an exalted idea of the resplendent attributes of God. The stupendous fabric of the visible world, though under what has been called for the sake of distinction his  
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*natural government*, and the laws of forcible necessity, discovers to us its almighty Author, in the arrangement of its parts, the combination of its motions, and the harmony of the whole : and can it be supposed, that he hath been less careful and attentive to arrange and perfect the intellectual world, which is subject to his *moral government*, and from its dignified existence must more immediately concern the Divine œconomy? The man that would philosophize with the utmost caution and modesty, might justly conclude in the *negative*, without the danger of being charged with unbecoming confidence. Here, then, by rising from matter to sense, from sense to intellect, and from earth to heaven, the sphere of the Divine agency opens to our view, and enlarges as we proceed : but our proudest ideas are lost when we quit our own shore, and venture without chart or compass, into the wide ocean of created things. Cast we our eyes which way we will, the prospect grows boundless ! It beggars the most capacious soul, and leaves  
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it boldest conjectures far behind. Of what an amazing extent, then, may we conclude the *works* and *government* of God to be !

It may be but reasonable here, to enquire for what *end* the different orders of intellectual beings were formed by God : for creation implies contrivance, contrivance intelligence, and this a reasonable use, and an ultimate end ; which all beings have, or ought to have. Was it then to resign them up to licence unrecalled, and make them the erring subjects of sportive chance ? To give them a charter of licentiousness, and thereby to invert the order of his works ? Surely not. He formed them for himself. To display the active perfections of his nature, and render his glory known ; impart suitable happiness to all, and govern them after the counsel of his own righteous will. The *happiness* of the creature and the *glory* of God must be the united *end* of creation ; and in order to this, he hath omitted nothing that was proper to be done. And what can be  
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conceived equally suitable to employ the Divine attention ? Here, the attributes of God harmonize. His majestic sovereignty, and inflexible justice, tempered with immense benignity ; and the contrivances of his wisdom executed by infinite power, are eminently discovered : and unite to form in our minds a true conception of his excellent greatness, and the grandeur of his works ; of his exuberant goodness, repletive presence, and incessant care.

By illustrating the harmony and relation of distinct intelligencies, their perfection being involved therein, must be somewhat established. For, what harmony can there be where excess or defect is found ? Or, what true and just relation, which is the basis of harmony, where disproportionate natures and adjuncts are allied or misplaced ? Relative perfection must be considered in reference to what goes before and follows after, or otherwise the well connected chain of natural and social order will be broken, and that which is suitable  
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and perfect in one respect, be unsuitable and imperfect in another ; therefore I consider their *perfection*, principally, as an universal or logical whole, which includes that of each individual.

God is the living fountain of being and intellection, the source and principle of true happiness ; and in proportion as these are imparted to, and enjoyed by any creature, it may be said to be *comparatively* perfect. It is *naturally* perfect, as being what God designed it in essence, attributes, and situation ; and *morally* so, as created in purity, with a knowledge of his will, revealed, or impressed on the conscience, with powers answerable to such knowledge. *Perfection* is found where *truth* and *goodness* are *united*. And as God is absolutely perfect, incapable of error and abounding in goodness, it is obvious, reasonable, and just to conclude, that *his works were all originally good, and duly perfect both in kind and degree*. This truth—this elementary and fundamental maxim, is not only useful,  
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but necessary to clear the justice of God from the imputation of evil, establish the Divine beneficence, and give us suitable ideas of his moral excellency. The creatures he called into existence were all strictly agreeable to his Divine mind and will, without any kind of blemish or defect, and completely fitted to answer their true design and proper ends. Some persons have questioned, and a few have had the boldness to deny it, from the irregularities that are prevalent in the world, and so have inferred, that all things were not originally good, &c. But the irrelevant claim of such, to the peerage of moral science disproves itself; as they must be but little acquainted with its algebra, and the doctrines of proportion, as well as extremely moon-eyed, to see no method of avoiding so dangerous a consequence; which indirectly leads them to dethrone reason, censure God, deny his truth, and leap from the rock of presumption into an ocean of unbounded perplexity. So that *whether it be right in the sight of God,*

*to hearken unto such more than unto him,  
judge ye.*

The works of the Lord were all *good*, when he called them into being. Good, because perfect; and perfect, as being exactly conformable to their exemplars in his unerring mind: and as opposites are destructive here of each other, of course free from every kind of evil. They were good *individually*, and good in *connection*, being agreeable to his idea and design; which we are assured of, not by man, nor angel, but, which places it beyond a doubt, by God himself, who cannot lie. For thus runs the report: *God saw every thing that he had made, and behold, it was very good.*

*Out of the mouth of the Most High proceedeth not evil and good. Who then can say of him, Thou hast wrought iniquity? His work and all his ways are perfect; a God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he. He is not a God that*  
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*bath pleasure in wickedness, neither can evil dwell with him. He is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. The same Lord over all is rich in mercy unto all that call upon him.* This description of him is strictly agreeable to the whole tenor of Scripture on this point. Pure philanthropy is his most amiable and distinguished property : and therefore, said Christ, in reply to the enquiry of the young ruler he felt an affectionate pity for, *There is none God but one, that is God.* All creatures are good but in their kind and degree. He it is who alone is universally and absolutely so, being remote from the possibility of evil, and possessed of all the different degrees of perfection ; nay, of perfection without degrees, for he is perfection in the abstract, independent and eternal.

God is frequently described by the exercise of his attributes, but defined by none but that of *love*. It is not said, God is power—eternity—justice ; no, but love.

This takes the lead of all his perfections, and renders him desirable to angels and men. It is the supreme felicity of God, and the source of all real happiness. 'Twas the principal motive of creation, and was diffused through all his works. 'Tis the bond of union, and principle of obedience in the heavens above, and ought to be so on the earth beneath. God is loving, and lovely ;—he is love itself. He hateth nothing that his hands have made, for he hath more or less impressed on all some evident emblems of what he is in himself : so that whatsoever of Moral Evil is found in any creature, it must be extraneous thereto, and superinduced, for nothing of the kind is approved of by or resides in him. He is a God of unsullied purity ; and iniquity, with every criminal approach to it, is hated by him with perfect abhorrence. If then the Lord is gracious and benevolent, and his productions bear a resemblance to himself ;—if the report on creation and providence is true, and every good and perfect gift is from him ;—if he cannot love

nor

nor approve of that which is morally evil, and opposed to his designs, consequently the position laid down is established, *s. a.* that his works were all originally good, and duly perfect both in kind and degree.

Having thus in some measure ascertained the harmony, perfection, and purity of intellectual nature ; and taken a slight glance at the wisdom, power, and goodness of God, which are indeed legible on all his works ; let us in the next place and chapter proceed to notice the opposite of *error*, viz. *truth*, and inquire into the nature, and conduct of its first transgressors.

## CHAP. II.

*Of Truth as it refers to God, and becomes known to man ;—of apostate Angels ;—their first estate ;—their knowledge and properties ;—with the nature and mode of their soul revolt.*

**T**HE Lord is the God of Truth, and it is as permanent as his nature—it *endureth for ever*. His truth is united with faithfulness, and manifested by the agreement of his words and works with the *pure* intention and *fixed* ideas of his eternal mind. In the abstract, as it respects him it would appear to be, the platform of all beings and things real and possible, in all respects; the *knowledge* of which to him is direct and positive, and not being capable of addition, must be *infinite*. God is complete in wisdom, power, and goodness, and therefore we have no ground to suppose, that any thing can escape the notice of his eye and deceive him, or that he should deceive any of his creatures. In him alone  
eternal



eternal verities are to be found, both in their essence and habitudes; and as far as the imperfect conceptions of men agree with these unfulfilled exemplars made known by his words or works, their ideas of the bright image of *truth*, and the pleasing consistency of its relations, are in the same degree metaphysically true. The ideas we possess of persons or things when conformable thereto, though they may not include all their properties and relations, are nevertheless, as far as they extend, logically true;—true in conception or representation; and when expressed with sincerity and veracity in adequate language or real action, *i. e.* when our thoughts, words, and deeds agree with each other, with the laws of God, and the reason of things, become significant, verbal, or moral truths. Persons and things, with their circumstances and relations, may be, and often are, partially or wholly *denied* to be what in reality they are by *thought* and *action*, as much as by *word* or *speech*. The language of the one is not less intelligible than that of the other.

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The apprehension and knowledge of *being* and its *affections* by the use of sense and reason, with their conveyance by *suitable* expression, and the agreement thereof with the rectitude of reason and the revealed will of God, constitutes to man the circle of *truth*; which is enlarged only by the expansion of the mind and the accession of knowledge. To the Divine intellect conception is truth; for God cannot conceive wrong, and the sphere thereof must be as vast as that of possibility. We can only know things to be true or false because they *are*, and agree or disagree with the measure of right judgment; but he knows them to be such, whether in being or not, from their opposition or relation to the immutable rectitude of his own mind. Hence it is, that the *Laws* he has prescribed for us, are a moral transcript of himself, and the essential difference between truth and error, virtue and vice unalterable. From it we may also infer, that the *ground* of these laws is the same to all orders of intelligent beings; to those whose knowledge and ability

lity are much circumscribed being less known, they exact less ; but to others whose circumstances are superior, being exceeding broad they exact more. Creatures without powers above those of sense are under no moral obligations. The *obligations* of all are in a *formal ratio* or proportion to their *difference* of sense and reason, situation, power and opportunity of which they are self conscious. *These* afford the precise *data* for the duties of natural religion.

Truth and error can never coalesce ; they are separate and opposed, and the idea of the one necessarily excludes that of the other ; therefore error must be either coeval with truth and distinct therefrom, or there must be a period when it began to be : for truth as it respects God had no beginning, it is coetaneous with his nature. To admit the eternity of error, or that it began with the manifestation of truth, is to undermine the fabric of moral excellency, and maintain the imperfection of the Creator.

Truth

Truth is a celestial virtue ; it is a perfection of God ; and enters into the natural and moral notions we entertain of him. Even *his works are verity and judgment.* David. They are both *true* and *just*. These perfections of the Lord were impressed upon his works, and reflected by his moral creatures ; which in their kind and degree as we have already seen, were formed according to his unerring will in rectitude and holiness. To be *conformable* thereto, as expressed in his word, made known by reason, or adumbrated in the moral notions we derive from the light of divine grace, is to be in ourselves and practice *true* ; and in the same degree *perfect—lovely—virtuous—good—and happy*. And to be opposed thereto, by action, recess or otherwise, is on the contrary, to be *false—imperfect—hateful—vicious—evil—and miserable*.

Wherever rational and accountable creatures exist, there of consequence moral *regimen* must be found ; they are strictly united, and the one cannot be without the other.



other. The right and power of such government, absolutely considered, belongs to God alone. He is the Head of all lawful authority, and those who act independent of, and in opposition to it, whether exercised by himself or his certain delegates, renounces his dominion and contests his legal sovereignty; and by such conduct deny a variety of relative truths, and reflect upon the glory of God. Such also introduce disorder and confusion, and assist to injure the real happiness of the world, which is the great *end* of his watchful providence; to guard and maintain, the honor of which, his jealous justice is exercised and concerned. This *end*, therefore, must include the display of his own glory, and the universal good of such creatures; being the same in *government* as in *creation*. Vide p. 34. What other could he propose worthy of himself, and consistent with their welfare? It becomes the freedom of his love, the riches of his bounty, and the greatness of his power. The both indeed may be considered as one and the same, in respect

respect of creature happiness. And therefore, *whatsoever is naturally perfective of such good or happiness, which is the chief end of their being, is an obligation of the law of nature.* It is the *prescriptive voice* of God; and the performance thereof *morally good*, as tending to individual and general felicity. And *whatsoever is naturally opposed to the true interest of the whole, or that of an individual, and has an influence in any way destructive of either, is by the same forbidden, being morally evil.* This method ascertains their *essential difference*, and will help us to compute the *real quantity* or degree of either, upon *the true grounds of morality.* It presupposes the *capability* of all intelligent beings, in their original state, to comply with such laws, being the eternal rules of right, and flowing from the nature of God and themselves, the knowledge of which is given for their direction and observance; and also the *possibility* of their deviation from and transgression of the same: and shows that all moral good and evil, as touching them, must be founded

founded in *reason* and *liberty*; for there can be neither one nor the other where these are denied the subject, or the capacities given are inadequate to the state it is placed in. There must not only be an *ability* to distinguish between right and wrong, but *power* and *opportunity* to act or refrain from action. Just retribution in the reward of approbation, or the infliction of punishment, necessarily implies an abuse or right application of such powers.

“ A nature *rational* implies the *power*

“ Of being *blest*, or *wretched* as we please ;

“ That power denied, *Men, Angels* were no more,

“ But *passive engines*; void of praise; or blame.”

Angels being exalted greatly in the scale of being, and residing near the throne of God, must be possessed of powers suited to their state, with a purity of nature answerable thereto; and therefore we may justly conclude, that those who apostatized, were pure and perfect before their fatal declension. As man and all beneath him, with

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the well wrought of complex nature, when surveyed by the piercing sight of Him from whom nothing can be hid, were said to be *very good*; can it be supposed, that beings who were greatly superior in the excellence of their nature, and the dignity of their situation, came a whit behind them in the perfection of *purity*? To affirm them to have been inferior thereto, or destitute thereof, is to charge the almighty Father of Spirits with imperfection and folly, in making the ministers of his will less perfect than man, who from their proximate situation should have most resembled himself.

The methods of operation and communications of angels must be different or superior to those of ours, from their nearest approach to pure incorporeity; and their knowledge no doubt very extensive, and of a more perfect kind than that known among us. Therefore said the wise woman of Tekoah, when by the advice of Joab, she addressed herself to David to obtain the recal of Absalom his banished son,



son, *As an angel of God, so is my lord the king to discern good and bad.* And again, *My Lord is wise, according to the wisdom of an angel of God, to know all things that are in the earth.* The same said Mephibosheth the son of Saul. By which they would fain have complimented him with a depth of penetration and degree of wisdom unknown to human beings, in ascribing to him a superlative degree of both. But even among those their conscious activity may greatly differ, for there may be an inconceivable variety in the degrees of their native capacity to receive and attend to their ideas and employment. It may be, they conceive by a kind of intuition the things they understand, and their mutual impartation is, perhaps, conveyed by such species as carry on their face the full meaning and reality of what they design. But our ideas of instant sight and immediate communication must be very imperfect; being so foreign to our method, who conceive of every thing by the varied combination of accumulated ideas, or the present

which we receive through the medium of external organs, excited by the impulsive power of varied sounds, and material or arbitrary signs. To conceive of things according to their reality, without the tedious and progressive labour of deductive reason, must certainly facilitate an acquaintance with truth; as an immediate knowledge is suited to prevent, within its *own* ken, the errors that frequently attend illative conception, and renders the difficulty in accounting for the origin of moral evil at first sight, greater than otherwise it would appear to be.

Now though it were allowed, that the Contriver of all entity had furnished angels with such comprehensive powers, whereby they were enabled to suit themselves to the contemplation of things peculiar to their state, and all the different forms of corporeal nature; and therein to trace the marvellous designs of infinite wisdom, the amazing executions of uncontrolled power, and the curious contrivances of Divine skill,

skill, and to see and know a sufficiency of each to lead them to admire and adore their benevolent Author, and search into the riches of his manifold wisdom which are now partially *known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places by the church*; still, it would not be right to infer, that they have *adequate and complete* ideas of each, or a clear and *perfect* understanding of all things that might fall under the *tuitus* of their discerning mind. Such knowledge is too wonderful for them; it is high, they cannot attain unto it. No finite being can fully comprehend *his great and marvellous works, for they are unsearchable and without number*. Eliphaz. *No one can find out the work that God maketh from the beginning to the end*. Sol. *That which is far off and exceeding deep, who can find it out?* Ibid. Not one among the highest order of created spirits, though possessed of the keenest mind, for these are but finite, however they may differ in their degrees of knowledge, and therefore none do, or possibly can, but that SPIRIT *which searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God*. E 3 The

The mysterious œconomy of redemption and the gracious acts of Christ in the church are subjects about which they employ their thoughts. *These things the angels desire to look into.* Peter. But they nonplus their sagacity, for the exceeding riches of his grace surpass *all knowledge*. Such is its infinitude as displayed in favor of the privileged sons of men, that we find

“ Powers most illumin’d *wilder’d* in the theme.”

Although they have a partial insight into the designs of God, from considering the *effects* of his power, which no one can have a *collective idea* of but himself, though they are but a specimen of what he is able to perform; yet, they have no *foresight* of those things which are but in a *possibility* of being, and remain so, till effected by the occasion of foreign motives. Neither have they a knowledge of such things as are only determined on, whether they respect the administration of God, or the transactions of men.

The



The time fixed by God 'ere *the transgression of desolation*—the reigning power of the wicked in the pollution of his sanctuary should *end*; and the period *when he shall have accomplished to scatter the power of the holy people*. Dan.—when they shall be spiritually united, the stigma of their dispersion cease, and the gracious power of the Highest overshadow them, they are unacquainted with; as also, with the awful period when nature shall be dissolved, and a general judgment of remuneration commence. *Of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven*. Christ. These are wrapt up in impenetrable secrecy. The clear knowledge of future events is seldom communicated, and his own interrogations imply an exclusive enjoyment. *Who among them can declare this? Who, as I, shall call, and shall declare it?—the things that are coming, and shall come, let them shew*. Isa. These form an abyfs that no created line of investigation can sound or fathom. Darkness is upon the face of the deep. *It is a path which no fowl knoweth, and which the vulture's eye hath not seen*. The

The illimitable riches and fathomless profound of Deity, with the secrets lodged in his bosom they know not; *for who hath known the mind of the Lord?* Paul. *who hath stood in his secret and perceived?* Jer. The physical necessity that there is in him cannot imply their acquaintance with either, for he taketh counsel with none of his creatures. His ways and actions are all free. Can they *by searching find out God?* can they *find out the Almighty unto perfection?* Zophar. *There is no searching of his understanding.* Isaiah.—Even the footsteps of his Providence are unknown fully to them. They see and know but in part, though they may judge a much greater part than we. The horrizon of human sight, however enlarged by the aids of philosophy, is limited indeed; theirs more extensive, but far from including *all the parts* of Divine Providence; which no doubt appear to them, as to us, though not in the same degree, frequently disjoined, opposed to, or but little dependent on each other, though an harmonious and complete concatenation.

concatenation. His proceedings must often have the appearance of intersecting lines, and as if they were useless, dark, or artfully perplexed, for the Lord in his catholic government is awfully mysterious; *His way is in the sea, and path in the great waters; his footsteps are not known.* Asaph. *Clouds and darkness are round about him, he hath made them his secret place: his pavilion round about him are dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies.* David. *He giveth not account of any of his matters.* Elihu. *His judgments are a great deep, and his ways past finding out!* Paul.

Moreover: they cannot trace the latent mazes of iniquity in the human heart without special direction and assistance from the Lord, *for he only searcheth and knoweth it.* Jer. *and chargeth them,* in respect of himself, *with both comparative and possible folly.* Eliphaz.—Thus having noticed their circumscription of mind and the limitation of their knowledge, which are common

common to all finite beings, let us make them the groundwork of what is to be advanced, and proceed therewith to analyze the cause of the fatal error of those angels who departed from their first estate, and brought Moral Evil into the world.

Unacquainted with the real extent of their power having never perhaps been fully tried, and but partially seeing their dependence on God, they might improperly infer therefrom, as also from their exaltation and dignity, in a manner not strictly consequent on the premises. Their having right views of the individuated objects they considered, or of their immediate ideas, could not in the nature of things prevent them from forming a wrong judgment of their state if they viewed it in an abstract and general manner, and had united incompatible ideas without attending to their opposition. That they can associate, compound, and reflect on their ideas, with their *mental* relations which exist not but with intelligent beings ; or in other words,

have



have a natural faculty (like reason in us) to perceive and judge rightly by its due application and exercise on things before them, is as clear as that they were once happy; because, happiness which is the perception and consciousness of something agreeable, right and good, consists, frequently, in an inversion of thought on past occurrences and abstract notions, as well as in the contemplation and enjoyment of things present. To compound and decompound their views by way of diversity and extension, to infer and conclude from known or given theorems, must be much more consistent with and agreeable to the abilities and liberty of intelligential substances, than with us; who from physical restriction, are incapable of the same or equal composition and enlargement. But those can greatly diversify the association, from the multiplicity of objects their extensive minds may unite and speculatively consider: and by placing them in different lights, or voluntarily associating such ideas as were neither collateral, nor allied by nature,

nature, which by the transposing and conjoining ability of their active minds the now fallen angels were able to do, a contrariety might be produced in their assemblage; a hasty and superficial consideration of which, might give birth to conceptions *erroneous* in their nature, and relatively *false*. Without this ability the *power* to reason, which is the general law of all rational agents, would be of no use.

Their possessing powers very extensive cannot argue indefectibility, or that they fully understand what exceed the limits of their definite powers; for by the abstraction, increase, and transposition of the ideas they incorporate, they become liable to error with those whose powers are more contracted; but their fallibility not being the same in degree, they are more culpable for a lapse of the understanding or an error in practice, and as a consequence, not to be supposed *equally* subjects for mercy. For where much is given, there also shall much be required.

• A probable

A probable objection suggests itself, which I would here state. It may be said, that "an undue juncture of ideas, would *certainly* have been detected by the comprehension of an immediate knowledge." To this I would answer : that their immediate perception of things, may resemble the knowledge we have of allowed axioms, or self-evident propositions, of which we become conscious at first sight, and therefore could no more assist them in detecting such an undue connection, its untried effects, and apparently good consequences, but by the *fallible* method of *progression*, than the conviction extorted from us by such propositions, would help us to reply to, or instantly understand the same words; if, being *transposed*, they were changed into a dark interrogation, or by the *accession* of others were now become an ambiguous syntaxis. To deduce one proposition from another, fill a chasm by conjecture, or conjoin extremes by intervening forms, are the only methods finite beings can take when they leave the land of certainty to go

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in quest of a distant and uncertain enjoyment. The knowledge which is not immediate, must be found by intermediate relations, and therefore be derived : if *right*, it must be through a succession of mean propositions that are just and true ; but if *wrong*, either through those that are mixed, or that are in themselves and relations false. In such a mental excursion they must successively consider, compare, and examine the natural correspondence and propriety of every ideal conjugation, both apart and together, and that in all their respects ; in the course of which, it is easy for any one to conceive, who can abstract his mind from the conviction that naturally arises from a very limited and proper arrangement of sensible and intellectual objects, how, and in what manner they might form a *wrong judgment* thereof. The false glare of deceitful prospects can mislead the mind, and make it confound imaginary objects with those of real and pure intellection.

Now,



Now, as every class of reasonable and intellectual nature, are necessarily determined in favor of what appears to them at present the best, and which promises the greatest quantity of real good or true happiness, to which all have an invincible attachment, passion here would claim the sole sway, was it not for the exercise of *liberty*, which is the only safeguard of their real bliss. And it is worthy observation, however strange it may appear, that the same necessity is so far from destroying the essential attribute of moral agents, (which consists in a liberty to choose or not to choose, to act or not to act, when, in what, and how far they may think proper) that it is perfective thereof; being strictly united to the power of indifference and choice in particular good, which is in fact, its only province in the intellectual œconomy. for as no one can prevent the impressions made on the mind by the power of imagination, the involuntary emotions excited by sudden surprize, nor the perception of things when presented to view, and agree-

ment with those that have the appearance of real good, but in such and the like, are for the general purely passive; it is the grand prerogative of the mind, to exercise its freedom and suspend the act of volition, that it may examine the motives that solicit assent, and duly consider the nature of the apparent good, whether or no it lies in the way to *real* happiness, or, is in itself a lesser good that would exclude from the enjoyment of a greater; and by which only an heedless precipitancy can be prevented. This necessary attachment to happiness, is a chief reason why the prosecution of what may be hastily approved of should be delayed till fully scrutinized, and *prudence* has made her choice; because the enjoyment of the particular good, so thought, may lead from that which is in reality so, and vanish in the grasp; be attended with a greater quantum of pain than pleasure, or interfere in some way with future felicity.

The exercise of freedom is antecedent to, though often blended with that act of the  
mind

mind which by some is strangely termed free-will. *Liberty* and *volition* are two distinct powers ; which if properly noticed and attended to, would in a great measure prevent the confused reasoning so frequently met with touching the moral agency of any or all intelligence. Liberty is the empire of self-determination ; it respects *choice* more than *action* ; and volition necessarily follows it. It was in the abuse therefore of their liberty, or rather in neglecting to use it, which as accountable beings the now fallen angels were capable of, and precipitating the absolute direction of the will without due attention, mature deliberation, and rational conviction, in compliance with the uneasiness of desire which naturally flowed from their rash approval of the specious objects under consideration ; as well as in attempting to effect what they did from themselves, by an unreasonable opposition to the laws of their own nature, that they betrayed a departure from their dependent and relative situation, and became the first, sole, active cause, of mistake, error, evil, and sin. F 3      Their

Their conjoining and transposing ideas, which distinct or consociated with others would have afforded certain truth, could not make them in the least degree guilty; no reasoning finite being is infallible; and in going thus far, they displayed but the innocent activity of their unbiassed minds. To reason, implies the powers thereof in exercise. Neither would a mistake in *conception* only, had it been unattended with the criminality of *desire*, have deprived them of happiness and exposed them to the wrath of God. To demur, disavow, reject, and withdraw from the sphere of the false blandishments and alluring charms united with *misconception*, which might attract their notice and invite to an embrace, they were *free* to do by a *possible* successive consideration, and an exertion of the powers with which they were entrusted; and by which they might have acquired, even under such circumstances, or by withdrawing from them, a sufficient knowledge of their every ethological obligation. But by *not using* this power, the next step they took



took undone them. Had they stopped here, and then retreated, all had been well. By accurately searching into and examining the consistency of their views, and with-holding their assent to the motives of inducement which excited to an immature decision, which belonged, (as I have already observed) to the great and important office of mental liberty, and in which its excellencies are most conspicuous; they might have refrained from prosecuting the desires consecutive thereto, which were the rudiments of sin, and have still retained their integrity and felicity.

By this method the *accidental* introduction of evil among angels is fairly accounted for, and the Almighty exculpated from every charge that would make him the immediate and efficient cause thereof. As *moral* agents, he had not designed their perversion, nor predetermined their fall. No mixture of evil in their nature, no invincible proclivity to error, no sinful motives to attract them, it must be from themselves

themselves alone that *they abode not in the truth, kept not their first estate, but freely left their own habitation*, and by the abuse of their unrestrained powers brought on their wretchedness and misery : which we have seen to be the case, by permitting their judgment to ratify its illicit and undue estimation, excite desire, and move the will to the direction of its operative faculties. So that it may be said of them, as Moses said of Jeshurun, *They have corrupted themselves.* They

“\_\_\_\_\_ by their own suggestion fell,  
“ Self-tempted, self-depraved.”

An error in reasoning if neglected or undiscovered is sure to engender others ; and thus error with them begat error, and led them into misery. It proved as the breaking forth of water, which enlargeth its stream and destroys its banks ; for it overwhelmed their reason, and threw down the bounds of discretion and obedience. It brought darkness over the clarity of their understanding, and then, as the *ignis fatuus*

to the midnight traveller, it appeared with friendly lustre and promised them safe guidance, but deceived and misled them thro' forbidden paths, to the presumptive ground on which they ventured. The effects therefore, of provoking the Lord to jealousy and striving with their Maker they now justly experience; being overthrown in their wickedness, and driven from the light of glory into the blackness of darkness, to be reserved in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great day. Their punishment is not as yet complete, but they look for and dread it; and therefore, those who were exceeding fierce with wild and conflicting passions, when coming out of the tombs inquired of the Son of God, if he was come to torment them before the time. Their misery and pain are now in proportion to the degrees of their perception and consciousness, which are heightened by the gnawing worm of reflection on the fulness of bliss they have lost, and the dreadful apprehension of increasing torment. Under such superior sensibility of guilt, and where  
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its duration is hopeless and without end, what intense anguish of spirit must they feel ! But Oh ! how great will their anguish be, when the key of the bottomless pit is turned on them, and the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever !

The actions of rational beings arise from a conscious or customary attention to the rules of duty, or the prospect of some pleasure or advantage to be obtained. The *desire* of the latter with the *desert* of the former, produced the transgression of angels. Desire unrestrained grew emulous of possession, and seizing on the reins mounted the chariot of reason, but like ambitious Phaëton, from being unable to govern was overturned, and sat on fire the heavens and the earth. Not that we are to suppose, it was from the irresistible impetuosity of desire, (though desire was the first thing which made them criminal,) nor from the prevalency of heated passions, or improper habits, that their understanding was led to  
judge



judge erroneously ; for these things were not antecedent to the judgment given, but followed as consequents thereon. What the *object* of their desire and rebellion might be ; what the deceitful quarry was at which they flew, whether independence, pleasure, pride, envy or the like ; when, and how long after they were created it took place ; with their exact number, the different rank they held in heaven, and the degrees of power, knowledge and splendor they have lost, &c. &c. I must leave to those sapient heads to determine who are conversant with utopian affairs, and whose *opia-maters* are often stretched with bold and similar conjectures. It is sufficient for my purpose to have found them originally pure and happy, on the grounds of analogy, reason, and scripture ; with ability to have remained so had they themselves thought proper. The least tendency to desires contrary to their state of subordination and the rules of duty, their reason should have curbed, resisted and condemned. They were the alone property of God, subject to his

his laws, and dependent on him for all they enjoyed ; and therefore, to assume the right and dominion of themselves, whatever their design might be, was to renounce his government, break the chain and order of nature, desert their situation, and deny themselves to be what in reality they were, with a variety of other obvious and important truths connected with their being and circumstances. A wish to be independent, if practicable, was contrary to their reasonable nature, *i. e.* a violation of the laws of reason ; it was wrong, unjust, and morally evil. Hence their present state exemplifies, nay, forcibly evinces the truth of Solomon's assertion, That he who hath no rule over his own spirit, is like a city broken down and without walls. They have perverted their way before the Lord. *They provoked him to anger with their inventions ; and the plague brake in upon them.*

The terms *object* and *idea*, as well as that of *views*, with the general method that has been

been pursued, if changed for others that should be thought more proper, and another first moving principle, instead of that of a false conception of their dependence, be substituted for the employment of the mind, the variation and addition of such terms would not in the least change the force and substance of the conclusion: as the foregoing are the stamina of morality, and comprise all under general expressions, being a kind of metaphysical whole. The operation of the mind in its different stages, from perception to the consummation of its decision, with the caution that should be observed in depending on the fidelity of any medium, might be here pointed out, were I writing alone on the agency of the mind; which as I am not I leave to others; and having noticed the first cause of evil in moral conception, &c. shall forbear enlarging thereon, as the soundness thereof cannot depend on redundant expletives; and with the same also beg leave to conclude this second division.

## CHAP. III.

*The original perfection of Man ;—the nature of his fall, and present situation :—Of the Law as a covenant of works ;—Redemption by faith in Christ ;—Of Love as a principle of obedience :—The power of conscience ;—the agreement of different dispensations ;—and the perpetuity and use of the moral Law.*

WHEN the Lord was pleased to form his design of creating the system of universal nature, it was of his own good and gracious inclination, that he chose from the immense variety of things possible, to make such creatures as should be accountable to him for their conduct. He determined their number and nature, with all the affections and circumstances of their original being ; and therefore gave them such powers and faculties, inclinations and dispositions, passions, adjuncts, &c. as rendered them not independent of, but related to each other, and strictly accountable



table to himself for the use they might make of them. In a word, the Lord formed an *universal whole* : the harmony and welfare of which is best promoted by a strict conformity to the rules of eternal order, *i. e.* the unchangeable laws of reason, or the nature of things ; which are necessary to be observed for the advantage and preservation of its dependent parts. We have just seen that a deviation therefrom produced confusion amongst the inhabitants of heaven, and was the means of some being expelled from glory and covered with remorse and endless despair.

The various orders and degrees of being in the intellectual world rendered it natural and proper that there should be a subordination among them, consistent with the inward and outward exercise of freedom as opposed to the necessity of action. Now, we find in this subordination not only *Angels*, but *Men*, and that both have been *guilty* of breaking the *divine laws*. For though we have no explicit account

of laws being given to angels, we are assured by reason, that they were either informed of, or made capable of finding out every part and branch of their duty. It was impossible for them, otherwise, to be guilty in the sight of a just and merciful God; because, *where no law is revealed or capable of being known, there is no transgression.* Paul. As to man, the wisest of his kind has given us a short but well wrote epitome of his primeval state and transgression: *Lo, this only have I found, that God made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions.* Sol. So important we find this truth was, and is, that he calls upon us to attend to and particularly notice it; and uses an exclusive adverb, to shew that his every other acquisition of knowledge however deep, extensive or various, pleasing or useful, was not to be mentioned with the pristine rectitude and aberrant conduct of man. We will therefore pass on to consider his *nature, state,* and the *divine conduct* towards him.

Man

Man when he came out of the hands of God was upright and perfect, and every way qualified to comply with the obligations of the state he was placed in : for, from him who is the Source of goodness and truth, nothing evil, unholy, or unjust can proceed, as we have already seen. He was created in righteousness and true holiness, after the image of him whose workmanship he was ; and with the empire of freedom in himself, of which he was possessed, he was constituted also lord over all the earth, with the creatures that were therein. He excelled them in every respect, as being the offspring of divine council, and the last best work of God below ; and being completely happy, was in his *nature* and *dominion* a lively resemblance of the great Creator.

The Almighty in the formation of his works, paid a special regard not only to their intended *uses* and final *end*, but also to the *means* by which they were to be secured. Hence we find, when we take a

turn into the department of either mere matter, vegetation, sensation, or instinct, that their respective properties and laws are proportioned, as far as we understand them, to their individual and collective design; and that they are subject to necessity, or the rules and guidance of a power originally implanted in them, from which they cannot err. But when we ascend to reason and intuition, such is not the case: the subjects of *these* are favored with a principle of self-guidance, and the free use of means suited to their respective ends; and are therefore capable of probation, morality and religion, of which the others are not. Hence we should consider man in his first estate not only as a creature, but as a reasonable being, endued *de facto* with suitable affections, the means of knowledge, and eclectic liberty; whereby he was enabled to serve his Maker, and observe or refrain from those things which concerned the state of trial in which he was then placed. The first law given to him in a positive way, that we are informed of,

was



was the prohibition of God touching the tree of knowledge of good and evil, with the penalty of death annexed to its transgression ; but undoubtedly, there were other laws to which he was also to be subject, the knowledge of which was imparted to him, or naturally arose to his view from considering his own state, with the relation he stood in to God, the creatures around him, and his posterity. Now, in this precept there was nothing unreasonable ; as our first parents were circumstanced, it was highly proper that something of this kind, which they were able to comply with, should be enjoined for their observance, and surely there could not be a less restriction than a single tree. God was their Creator and Governor, and therefore had a reasonable *right* to enact such laws as he knew were just and proper ; and they also had a reasonable right to obey. But, alas ! we find they failed in this particular, and gave way to temptations they were able to resist. They hearkened more to the beguiling language of the tempter and their  
 own

own sensitive appetite, than to the promise or menace of the Lord ; and in partaking of the forbidden fruit broke through the divine laws, threw off their spotless robes of innocence, and rebelled against his mild and just authority. In it they were guilty of ingratitude, pride, folly, and infidelity. Reason was overcome by desire, and allegiance fell a victim to ambition. Here then, as it respects man, was the breaking out of Moral Evil, which has since deluged the world—the opening of the fatal present of the accomplished and feigned Pandora—the kindling of that spark which, to use the language of St. James touching the evils of the tongue, has set on fire the course of nature. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth !

The love of good in general was interwoven in the nature of Man. This natural love, in them, submitted to the dictates of *sense* ; for instead of considering what they were with their rational obligations, and what they were about to do with its threatened

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ened consequences, they suffered their judgment to be blinded by the growing love of sensitive but mistaken pleasure, which was an act of concupiscence, and the ground of evil in general. The fruit of the tree appeared good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise. Hence they saw, or thought they saw, what was sufficient to determine them to the risk of rational good, and the pursuit of apparent and sensible advantage. From approbation sprang desire which corrupted the mind, Passion betrayed its master, and assumed his appearance and authority. It lifted the flood-gates of sin, and left in the turbid streams of calamity and woe. It is said, *Man called death to him, and pulled destruction upon himself with the work of his own hands.* The affair of Sampson at Gaza, after losing his sight by betraying himself through his affection for woman into the hands of his enemies, when he bowed himself, plucked away the pillars of the stately temple of the philistines, and buried himself and thousands of the people in its ruins ;  
affords

affords but a faint idea of the complicated and and lasting ruin, that Adam by sin brought upon himself and posterity. And though the threatened punishment, in its full extent, is mercifully postponed by the interposition of divine grace in the person of the Redeemer, who in a qualified sense, is *the repairer of the breach*, and *the restorer of paths to dwell in*; yet, we have daily and convincing proofs within and around us of its awful and gradual accomplishment, in the lamentable effects of sin and the universal reign of death, which can be accounted for only upon the *fall* of man. Mournful reverse of what he was before! How greatly fallen! How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto *thee*, but unto us and our fathers confusion of face, because *we* have sinned against thee.

The operation of the minds of our ingenerated Parents during this fatal transaction, which was not only the transgression of a  
positive



positive command, but of various other laws and truths to which it became them to be subject, may be explained by adverting to the principles already laid down concerning unrestrained agency, with the particulars pointed out in chapter the second of the intellectual operation of Angels; for it is probable the properties of the mind in both, however they may differ in degree, are somewhat similar. These, united with the deceptive power of Satan, will easily solve the *cause* of their anomalous conduct: and with the influence of such motives as arise from a variation of circumstances, and the accession or alteration consequent thereon, without any other modification whatever, would unfold the *method* and explain the *cause* of every moral error. By this means, the conduct of the Lord is fully cleared, and the *evil* of the creatures act chargeable only on himself. What the consequences of the fall are in their full extent, how, and in what degree the powers of the human mind are abridged, depraved, and affected thereby, with the exact

exact alteration and present influence of material circumstances, I am not concerned to examine as being beside my *purpose*; which is to shew, that *Moral Evil* proceeds alone from the conscious *liberty* of intelligent creatures to act or not to act as they themselves think proper; and that man both *before* and *since* the fall is a *forensic* being, and his conduct the subject of judicial cognizance.

To be convinced of the certainty and truth of original depravity and its mournful consequences, we have only to open our eyes and attentively peruse the volume of our own hearts, the transactions of human life, natural history, or the sacred scriptures; and we shall find, they each bear the same testimony, and concur to extort conviction from and satisfy even the cautious and incredulous mind of their unwelcome reality, by an abundance of sensible, intrusive, and mid-day proofs. The malignity of sin discovers itself to us by its direful *effects*. What a train of evils has attended

attended its commission ! Turn which way we will ruin and misery meet our dejected sight, and present themselves to consideration. The world itself, in its present state, is the sad monument of wilful disobedience ; and in its deep and legible inscription, which is graven as with the point of a diamond, we may read its extreme folly and equitable curse.

God as *moral* governor of the world could not but be offended with the *petulant* conduct of his creatures, as being opposed to the holy rectitude of his nature, and the goodness of his providence ; the authority of his laws, and the sanctions by which they were guarded ; the veracity of his truth, and the glory of his attributes ; the harmony of nature, and the welfare of the world. To maintain which, it became him from his legislative and sovereign dignity, to exercise his insulted *justice* in the demand of satisfaction, or the punishment of the guilty : which has been done by the display of his utter aversion to all sin, and

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withal,

withal, the lenity natural to divine goodness. The expulsion of Satan and his faulty colleagues from heaven, with the redemption of mankind by the death and merits of Christ, and their free acceptance on the mild and gracious conditions of the new covenant, are a united, awful, and bright manifestation of this. Herein we may behold the *goodness* and *severity* of God.

The LAW as a covenant of *works*, once broken is rigorous in its demand. Its language is, *the soul that sinneth it shall die*. It calls for the *life* of the aggressor. It admits of no *excuse*; it provides no *remedy*. Hence, we have reason to admire the unsearchable riches of Divine Love in providing a Redeemer for us, and gratefully adore him for his kind interposition in the behalf of man. By this seed of the woman, this sacrificial and atoning lamb, who was virtually slain in the divine council, and verbally promised immediately after the fall, mankind are delivered from the guilt and  
thralldom



thralldom of original sin, from the curse of the law, and from the law as a covenant of works ; which from that time neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear. By him the forfeited empire of rational liberty is in a measure restored, and human nature, through the assistance of grace, made morally capable of the obligations of christianity. By him has been published to a sinful world universal indemnity on the mildest terms. The repentance of sinners, had they been able to grieve for their errors and loss like fabled Niobe, could not have entitled them to pardon ; much less have restored them to the plenary favor of God here and hereafter. Being guilty, there was a moral necessity for satisfaction ; either in their legal punishment, which to suspend or remit in the lowest degree was an act of undeserved kindness, or in the way and manner that God in his gracious designs of mercy was pleased to freely devise and accept. The *death* of Christ, in which he suffered in our place what we only as sinners could deserve, and

in which, as being of divine appointment, the virtue and efficacy of his atonement lay, was the result of goodness, wisdom, and expediency; and no doubt, the most proper and effectual to attain its desired end. He did not suffer as *actually* guilty of sin, nor are we made *actually* and legally righteous by the positive imputation of his immaculate righteousness; which if we were, would supersede the necessity of conversion and personal holiness, and discharge us from all our moral obligations as creatures and subjects. It would extenuate the freedom, riches, and glory of divine grace; and render its manifestations but mere acts of justice. Christ was not so much our substitute as mediator. The *propitiation* for sin by his sacrificial and penal sufferings, between which and our desert there was no relation, but what for his sake arose from the free grace and infinite mercy of God, as promised and designed, delivers us by repentance, actual faith, and conversion, as the conditions of the new covenant, of which

which we are made capable by the teachings and assistance of the Holy Ghost, from the guilt and punishment of past offences, and is the *ground* of our being accepted by God as just and righteous. By him the uplifted arm of justice was barred; and the flaming sword of the watchful cherubim removed, which guarded the way to the tree of life. So that we are redeemed *de jure, i. e.* in a judicial view from the *demerit* of sin, and the *rigour* of the law; because Christ suffered with that design, and to secure our present and final salvation upon the terms of the Gospel. Yet his merit, however valuable, would have been of no avail to our reconciliation, had not the kindness of the sovereign Legislator inclined him to admit and accept of it as a full and sufficient atonement. But we are only actually justified and redeemed, and possess a *real* inward assurance thereof, on yielding to the power of divine grace, and complying with the conditions upon which this indemnity and salvation are offered.

We are not under the law as our first parents were, nor under it as a preceptive dispensation of bondage and terror, if we have believed with the heart unto righteousness; but under the merciful dispensation of gospel grace, which affords us the aids of the spirit of holiness. If we are led by this spirit and have received the adoption of sons, we are delivered from the curse and condemnation of the law, which gendereth to bondage and to death; and being made free from the guilt of sin, we serve in newness of spirit, and the righteousness of the law, through faith in the Redeemer, is fulfilled in us. Faith is the leading condition of present and final acceptance; and as it receives and unites us to Christ who is the true vine, the end of the law, and the sum of the gospel, is imputed for, or instead of legal and personal righteousness. By grace we are saved from first to last, through simple and active faith, which purifieth the heart, and is productive of and works by love to God and man; and thereby, becomes a *saving* principle



principle of universal *holiness*. As it freely apprehends Christ in justification, and is therefore, the *means* of the renewed life; so by continuing to believe, it *acts* as a principle of assimilation, and renders the imperfect services of the humble believer acceptable. The graces which enlighten, quicken, and enable us to believe, and by which we live, walk, and act as the *free* servants of righteousness, in opposition to the reign of sin and the carnal mind, with a holy superiority over them, are founded on, and *derived* through Christ; and therefore, in their implantation and growth, exercise, enjoyment, and reward, that is from the first dawn of conviction to their consummation in glory, they are strictly, and properly speaking, the free and unmerited *gifts* of God. Merit in man and justification by works, as available with him to reconciliation, are wholly excluded. But the inward and outward *fruits* of the spirit, may, and must be admitted both here and hereafter, as satisfactory *evidences* of the new birth, and a religious life.

life. Good *works* then as they proceed from grace, and are allowed the honor of being such by God himself, ought not to be injuriously derided, nor branded with the opprobrious epithet of legality. These never did, nor ever will detract from the glories of Christ, or lessen the merits of his grace. How should they dispute the palm of victory with him, when they bear not the root, but his grace as the root beareth them? They are the useful and pleasing ornaments of a holy and spiritual temple, which God is erecting by his spirit for a lasting habitation. And as he laid the foundation in boundless grace, so will he bring forth the top stone thereof with triumphal shoutings of the same. Where is human boasting then? It is for ever excluded.

It is written, and therefore, I may declare the *decree* which no one can reverse or turn aside, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it; and his covenant he will not break, nor alter the thing that is gone  
out

out of his lips. VERILY, VERILY, I SAY UNTO THEE, EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD. Salvation is freely offered, Whosoever cometh to him, in faith, he will in no wise cast out. The gates of mercy are thrown open, and if we will not enter in, how can we escape either spiritual death or eternal ruin? If we believe, we shall enter into life. Let us therefore be thankful that we are not excluded from hope, and shut up in unbelief and black despair. We are called to glory and virtue, and invited by Christ himself, to enter into the purchased possession. Faith points the way, and hope and love cheerfully supply the means. We should love him because he first loved us; and love one another, for *love* is the fulfilling of the *law*. This divine principle when infused into the renewed heart actuates the man, and becomes the soul of his soul, and the spring of his actions. It sweetly inclines to the performance of what is right, and is superior to the restraints of moral precepts, being a law unto itself,

itself. The obedience of love is not servitude but freedom. It lays the foundation of every just, worthy, and religious action. It corrects and regulates the natural bent of the will, and informs and assists the weakness and insufficiency of our abridged liberty and depraved understanding. It turns the heart and its affections from the world and time, to heaven and eternity; and enables the believing soul, to live as in the suburbs of the celestial city. It is a principle of holy *attraction*, which all derive with light and heat, from the bright beams of the sun and centre of the intellectual system, who *orderly* revolve in their appointed and respective distances around him. It unites virtue with piety, and morality with religion; and supplies the former, with all the powerful motives and advantages of the latter. By it, virtue herself becomes evangelical, and is carried to her utmost height; while the propriety of moral action and the duties resulting from the truth and relation of things, are evidently attended to in the cheerful obedience



dience of love. It is the key stone, and support, of morality's admired arch. Without it, the pillars of virtue yield beneath the pressure of her stately edifice. How useful then, and desirable also, is this principle of gospel morality ! It animates its possessors, and crowns them with felicity. It sheds its benign rays over the dark chaos of the fallen mind, and irradiates the gloom of individual and social life. It in some measure gives reality to a golden age, and distributes its happy effects on all around. Wherever it is found to reign, no needful grace will be wanting ; so that with propriety it may be said, *mercy and truth are met together ; righteousness and peace have embraced each other.* But, to drop the consideration of this amiable grace, on which I had no design to speak so largely, and return to my subject.

Moral Evil is of a personal nature, and in the eye of the law, has an immutable relation to those guilty of its commission, who are alone liable to the *judicial* penalties consequent

consequent thereon. It is attended with personal guilt and personal desert of punishment, by which the offender becomes legally obnoxious to death. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son. The Lord disclaims the proverb, which indirectly charged him with being cruel and unjust concerning the land of Israel, saying, *The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge. As I live, saith the LORD GOD,—all souls are mine, as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine;—every one shall die for his own iniquity.* Sinful individuals shall bear their own guilt; shall be exposed to temporal judgments here, and being finally impenitent shall find the reward of their wickedness to be upon them hereafter. This is equally true touching we who now live, as of former generations that are passed away. The equity and settled rules of his procedure are for ever the same. *Righteousness and judgment*

*judgment are the habitation of his throne.*

In order to deter mankind from running into sin and incurring its threatened punishment, the Lord has graciously afforded the world different editions of the Laws of his moral government, which may be considered as the revealed principles of moral duty. Part of them are written on the heart, and constitute *conscience*,—the *law* of the mind. *For when the Gentiles which have not the law, do by nature* (as assisted by grace) *the things contained in the law, these having not the law, are a law unto themselves ; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts.* Paul. Conscience is founded on a *sensibility* of duty, and independent of education, is furnished with notions of right and wrong. It is an essential attendant of rational nature, being the reasonable determination of what ought or ought not to be done. Where the written law is wanting, it becomes in such cases, the voice and law of God and his deputy governor in the heart of man.

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It is true the mind is blinded by reason of sin, prejudice, and impure perceptions; and the liberty, with the sensible superiority he had over his bodily actions, thoughts and desires, enfeebled by natural corruption and habitual vice; but the powers of these are in some measure restored, by that universal light and preventing grace which visit all in a free and sovereign way. Without *these*, what is *natural* conscience? It has neither a warning voice, nor reasonable authority. It is totally dark and evil. It is feared as with a hot iron, and filled with the works of death;—it is morally dead. Thus it was with Adam, and mankind in him, when the Spirit of the Lord took its departure; before he was revisited with the light of grace, the happy forerunner of future redemption. And thus it is with those in whom the insulted Spirit has given over striving, who are fallen into total apostacy, being twice dead and plucked up as by the root. *If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!* But this is a state, which thro'  
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the riches of divine goodness, forbearance, and long suffering is seldom known. *Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die ! saith the Lord God : and not that he should return from HIS ways and live ?* Every thought and motion of the mind in those who are not morally dead, proceed from either *yielding* to, or *resisting* the operations and light of grace during the day of their visitation. The former is of God, the latter of themselves. By nature they are the willing slaves of sin ; and are only free to righteousness as they oppose not, but avail themselves of the assistance of grace. Nature strives to retain its dominion, and gives way reluctantly to grace. Conscience, assisted thereby, checks the inclination of our depraved will, and prevents it from being hurried down the rapid stream of corrupt nature, into the vortex of ruin. Whatever then arises from conscience, or mingles itself with our thoughts, words, or actions, that has a tendency to oppose and lessen the reign of sin, makes us debtors to *grace*.

*Conscience*, originally, was the *light of nature*, and the *law of reason*. It was the standard of natural religion. The reign of nature, was then the reign of God. And as its *light* and *power* which it lost by the fall, are in a measure restored to the human mind, they are frequently, but improperly spoken of in a *natural* view, as distinguished from the written word of God, and the advantages of gospel grace. But his *natural*, *verbal*, and *written* laws, agree to promote the same design, though attended with evidences that differ in kind and degree. To the light of conscience, therefore, he has added a more clear and explicit revelation of our *duty*, in the declarations of his *word*. The Mosaic Rituals, in their appointment of rites and ceremonies, were positive and arbitrary. Their canons of purification, expiation, &c. which were made necessary obligations of that dispensation, were in reality, different to the general doctrine of the Jewish law. These as *terms* of acceptance, and as constituting a government between God and man,

man, are no longer necessary; being in effect, superseded by the gospel. But the moral law is always the same, being founded on the nature and relation of things. The two tables of testimony, written with the finger of God, and given unto Moses in the mount, contained its concentrated essence. Its doctrines are of indispensable and perpetual obligation, and have been gradually opened and explained by the sacred writers, to the advent of Christ. He came not to destroy the moral law, but to fulfil and enforce it. Not to slacken its demands and dissolve its obligations, but explain them in connexion with the doctrines of grace. These, by increasing our knowledge and ability, add to our obligations; which may increase in futurity as the others are advanced. Many of its branches may be too refined for our present state, and above our understanding and practice here; nevertheless, we may be certain the whole in their design and observance, must have respect to indivi-

dual and common happiness. It is here, Nature, Reason, and Religion meet.

The Almighty, both before and since the fall, has always addressed himself to man, as to a rational being, capable of attending to his directions. This was the case, when he spoke to Adam and his sons, and to others before the flood : to Noah, Abraham, and his seed : to Moses, the Judges, the Prophets, &c. As well as to Christ and his Apostles, and to the world by all. At these sundry times, and in divers manners, he unfolded his *will* to mankind, and clearly informed them what he required them to do. And surely those different dispensations, afforded in much mercy to inform us of the disease of our dark and impaired nature, which experience corroborates, as also of the appointed method, whereby we may obtain without money or price a free and easy cure, cannot possibly have left us in a worse state, than Adam himself was in when he was driven out of Eden. The whole volume  
of



of inspiration addressees itself to the reason of man. The Lord therein, has laid before us, such motives and inducements as are easily understood, and enforced the performance of his will with the most powerful persuasions. However, he uses no natural efficiency, force, or impulsion to effect, what he commands ; but direction and counsel, reason and exhortation, promises and threatenings. He strives with us as with reasonable beings. He persuades and invites us. He allures us by love, or awes us by terror. He seeks our happiness, but allows our doom.

All finite reasonable beings have certain rules to conform to : and as He who made them knows best what they are *able to perform*, his LAWS whether natural, arbitrary, or supernatural, respecting *belief* or *action*, which comprise their *whole duty*, are accommodated thereto, and require only a *reasonable service*. The laws of intellectual Nature are not, nor cannot, be reversed by those of Revelation. The latter,  
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by reason of sin, become useful to and perfective of the knowledge of the former. The religion of nature, is the belief and practice of truth. Truth is eternal. To behave according to the nature and reality of things, is to treat and use them as what in truth they are, and not to violate them either directly or indirectly in any one respect. This is to pursue right ends, by right means ; this is the high road to happiness ; this is perfect virtue. As this was at first the designation of man, so it still continues to be ; and to promote it, the laws of Revelation accord with those of Nature. The both proceed from him, who is always in one mind, and with whom there is no shadow of change. They partake in a sense of his immutability. This progressive and uniform consent, is observable, not only in all his *laws*, but in the *doctrines* of Revelation itself. There is a perfect agreement here also. The first dawn of mercy after the fall, was in its nature the same, and proceeded from the same source, as those noon-tide beams which create a  
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gospel day. The promise then made, let the departure from paradise be either real or an allegory, was the publication of returning joy. It was the gospel in its infancy. The aurora of future bliss: the morning of redemption. It lifted the veil to the eye of hope, and shed a faint and distant light over the moral gloom of the human mind. The doctrine of redemption and those connected with it, were the same then, as they were afterward under the Jewish law; and the same then, as they are now under the gospel. The different dispensations have contributed only to throw additional light on the same truths. Their connexion, and progress, have been uniform and gradual. What is gospel under the present, was gospel under all. The same line of mercy is discoverable throughout.

Is the moral and jewish *law* then against the *promises* of God? God forbid. It is no dishonor to say, he cannot act inconsistent with himself. His designs are uniform.

form. The written law was added to restrain from, and discover sin; to convince and condemn transgressors; and to be subservient to the covenant of grace. To be a schoolmaster to teach us the nature and desert of sin, under which the scriptures conclude all; the folly and danger of striving to recover the forfeited favor of God by keeping its broken precepts, and by a legal and personal righteousness to merit and obtain, independent of divine grace, eternal life; but above all to *direct* and lead us to Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness, to every humble believer. The law shews the want of pardon, righteousness, and life; but cannot confer them. It may pursue us, as the avenger of blood to the city of refuge, but its power to condemn and punish is lost, when we become the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. This is justification by faith. By this we obtain the righteousness held out in the promises to faith, which it believes on and receives. This faith is a saving and actual principle of spiritual life, which



which we must first receive, before we can prove that we live and walk in the Spirit. It is a faith which *worketh* by love. Here, we are constrained to recur again to the law, which after bringing us to Christ, though it ceases to be the ministration of death and condemnation, is not to be dismissed and thrown aside as useless. Attention to the law, cannot merit the divine favor, nor will it help us to legal holiness in our own strength, or thereby to claim eternal life as our just reward ; nevertheless, it is to be considered serviceable as a rule of judgment, and a guide of life. The believer though called unto liberty, and made the Lord's freeman, is not without law to God, but under the law to Christ. The moral law has still its use, and the obligations of the gospel are binding. The law is gospelized in the precepts of christianity, which may be properly called the law of the gospel. Christianity itself is called a law. The royal law,—the law of Christ,—the law of faith,—the law of the mind,—the law of righteousness,—the law  
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of the Spirit of life,—the perfect law of liberty, &c. The law and the gospel must be taken together, according to the *terms* on which mercy is conditionally shewn to mankind, otherwise the fixed plan and method of salvation are considerably injured. The law is good, if a man use it lawfully.

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## CHAP. IV.

*Human testimonies in favor of moral agency ;  
 —the use and abuse of the Passions ;—  
 Objections drawn from reason to the  
 existence and consequences of Moral Evil  
 stated, and answered ;—with remarks  
 on the nature and influence of Divine  
 Foresight.*

THE numerous testimonies which might be brought from heathen and christian writers to prove man a subject capable of virtue, and consequently a moral agent, amenable to law and answerable for his conduct, according to the dispensation he is favored with, would be to heap up, and recount evidences without end. *Virtue* is true self interest, pursued by *right* means ; and is productive of real happiness ; the love of which is coeval with our being and inseparable from our existence, being our first wish, and last end. It has been so in every stage of the world, and therefore, must be the *summum bonum* of man. The

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precepts of those, unacquainted with the lively oracles of truth, being, however imperfect in their recommendation of virtue, the teachings of conscientious reason, prove there is implanted in the human mind a knowledge of what is just and right. That a deviation from this moral sense,—this reasonable and instinctive morality, is contrary to the voice of nature, of reason, and of God. Pythagoras, the head of the Italic sect, taught his disciples, that virtue constituted human perfection, and that reason was the best guide and instructor. Epicurus, that virtue was happiness, built on the tranquility of the passions. Socrates, that the study of ourselves, and the science of managing life with wisdom, conducted to virtue. Plato, that virtue was desirable for itself, and that by it we grew into a resemblance of the Deity. Aristotle, that virtue is a habit founded on choice. And the Cynics who contemned almost every thing beside, with the inconsistent Stoics who affirmed all crimes to be equal, sought happiness in virtue, and  
considered



considered it to be the perfection of life. In short, it would be tedious, to both you and me, to enumerate the acknowledgments of the Ethnics only, to prove virtue arises from *choice*, and from it, that man is a moral agent ; which the writings of Epictetus, the Offices of Tully, and the Ethics of Leneca alone sufficiently determine.

When we consider man in reference to moral obligations, it is proper to conceive of him as the subject not only of understanding, liberty, will, memory, &c. and of such passions and affections as form with them the constitution of the mind, but also, of such inclinations and dispositions as are founded in the nature and arise from the temperament of the body and state of the animal fluids. When *these* are kept in subjection to *those*, reason and knowledge keep their proper place, and man so far, performs the dictates and complies with the natural rules of order. This is the case in his attention to the cardinal

and other virtues, which entitles him to the high character of rationality. Whoever attends to his depraved passions and pursuits, his gross and carnal inclinations, in a base unmanly submittal to their direction, and neglects the consideration of what is virtue and vice, forfeits this distinguished character, and deserts the order of his species. To disregard the laws of human nature, is to do violence to reason. When the passions are suffered to dictate and control, the beast runs away with the man. The Centaur is no longer fabulous. It is realized by vice. The *reign* of the passions is direct tyranny, and founded in usurpation ;—it is treason against the well being of man. Their uncontrolled *judgment* produces a double birth. The fruit of their licentious amours are the well known twins, *sin* and *woe*. The hand of the latter always takes hold of the heel of the former. They are found *wherever* the passions pursue pleasure by forbidden means ; *whenever* they stray, or run wild in the paths of mistaken self love.

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I would not by these reflections be understood to insinuate, that the *passions* of men are to be mortified by ascetic austerities, lulled into absolute rest, or destroyed by a stoical apathy ; or that their exercise cannot but be injurious to them, as Zeno and his followers wrongly imagined. On the contrary, when regulated aright and under the guidance of true reason they change their character ; and men are designed accordingly temperate, chaste, prudent, charitable, and the like. They are of the greatest use to produce and support moral action, in the discharge of our perfect and imperfect obligations. Without their exercise we could not attend to or engage in the duties which we owe to God, our fellow creatures, and ourselves ; which are the three main branches of morality : nor indeed, to any of their numerous ramifications. It is only when they are indulged to excess, or turned into a wrong channel, that they become hurtful in any degree. The passions and dispositions, as well as the intellectual perfections that

man is endued with, are all abstractedly considered, and as it respects their intended use, not only free from evil, but really good ; and suited to pursue, attain, and enjoy true happiness. They are good, because commensurate to their respective purposes and designs, and the best possible to accomplish their intended ends. They are admirably adapted, when regulated by grace and under proper direction, to answer all the purposes of life, whether human—social—or divine. What kind of creatures should we be, if stripped of these useful commotions of the soul ? The passions are awakened, moved, and named from the manner in which the mind considers and acts towards things as right or wrong, hateful or amiable, and so on. Hence their use in morality. Morality itself is but reason in action. Reason in action, implies the reasonable use of the passions ; and that not only in the limited sense of morality as confined to either social or secular concerns, but as it extends herself to and embraces all the obligations in which

we



we act as free agents. Hence their use also in religion. Nay, what is either *natural* or *revealed* religion but the reasonable service of man? The latter, of course, possesses advantages unknown to the former, but it has neither reversed its dictates, nor cancelled its obligations. If morality be the reasonable belief and practice of truth, it must be so whether truth be natural or revealed; and to reject or neglect either, or any part of either, must in the same degree make it defective and criminal.

“Reason pursu’d is faith: and unpursu’d

“Where *proof* invites, ’tis reason, then, no more.”

To be *moral*, is to believe and practice *truth*; to practice truth, is to be *reasonable*; to be reasonable, is to be *religious*; to be religious, is to be *happy*. This is the chief-end of man. This is the philosopher’s stone, that turns what it touches into gold. It is the secret art, and *right* way, of being *truly* happy. That is, in our degree, as much so as the circumstances

ces of our situation will allow, by making the best of them in all cases. And is it possible, that the passions should be no way useful in the pursuit and enjoyment of true happiness? That the refined pleasures of mental and active sensibility, are but the sparkling errors of a disordered soul? That devotional lukewarmness is more acceptable to the Deity, than the flaming incense of gratitude and praise? Without either love or joy, tenderness or desire, fear or hope, with the other passions which are inherent in man, the nerves of exertion would be unstrung, and mankind rendered unfit for the concerns, the duties, and the offices of life. The love and pursuit of pleasure, which keep the busy world alive, would be unknown; and the wide stream of human action locked up in eternal frost.

The difficulty of fully reconciling the certainty of divine knowledge, with the contingency of moral events; and the prevalence of Moral Evil, with the government

vernment of a wise, powerful, pure, and loving Being ; has inclined some persons to embrace the doctrines of fate : others to lessen, or explain away the universal contagion and consequences of the fall ; and some to deny them altogether. But surely, there is no need to renounce the belief of truths which are as clear as the light, and accompanied with all the evidence the nature of the subject will admit of, because we cannot comprehend others which we are not concerned in to know. Though it should be allowed, that there are some particulars relating to this subject equally abstruse, to us, with those mysteries of our religion we are obliged to resolve into the arcana of Deity ; and which will not admit of being explained by *analogy*, the rational and proper method of unfolding *divine* truths ; yet, it would add but a few *items* more, to the long list of our acknowledged ignorance. Many things are understood now, and found to be useful, which were not so a few ages back. Such may be the case, in time to come,

with

with some of those that repel our inquiries, and present difficulties to be considered which we cannot solve. Whether it be so or not, we must remain unjustifiable, if presuming to be wise above what is written, we complain of the dispensations of the Lord, and thereby declare that his ways are not equal. To shew, that we have no sufficient reason to do this, it may now be needful to state, and answer in a brief way, the most material *objections* to the account given of the origin of Moral Evil, as proceeding from created agency.

The ancient doctrine of the Manichees, which has been defended under another form by some modern sceptics, hardly merits to be noticed as an objection, much less deserves a serious reply. They suppose "two first principles, from whom all things proceed, the one the author of all good, and the other the author of all evil." This opinion, we are informed, was first held among the Persians; but when nearly lost, was revived by Zoroaster, and thence  
not



not unfrequently called the Zoroastrian error. But the bare supposition of two infinite, separate first principles, is sufficient alone to manifest its absurdity. It is so irrational as to render it inexpedient to discuss and refute it. Every attempt to establish it by reason and philosophy, is suited only to overthrow the whole. The modern defenders of an evil principle existing in nature, have improved the doctrine, and considered the Devil nearly under the same idea. But this in reality cannot better the case. His power over man is neither so direct nor extensive as is commonly imagined. He is accused of many things, that, strictly speaking, he is not the author of. His power no doubt is great, but he can only range to the extent of his chain. Though his temptations, by which he may excite and dispose us to Moral Evil, are many, we are so framed and assisted as to be able to resist and escape them all. If we were not, it would impeach the goodness and justice of God, to subject his creatures to the government  
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of Satan, and afterward punish them for what they could not avoid. He is a restrained agent, and cannot impress more power on us, than is consistent with our responsibility. Beside, allowing this opinion to have any force, it would not account for the method whereby Satan himself became so, without making God the author of all the evil in the world. For if Satan was *originally* evil, and has since been spreading its baneful influence by irresistible inducements; the Creator must have implanted the seeds of moral turpitude in his constitution, or so formed it, as to be necessarily the source thereof. To do, or cause to be necessarily done, is nearly one and the same mode of speech. But this is contrary to the light of truth, in reason, nature, and revelation; and was not, is not, nor cannot be the case. *Far be it from God that he should do wickedness, and from the Almighty, that he should commit iniquity.* Elihu.

The objections of some modern writers, which they have embraced and advanced after the Epicureans and Academics, justly claim and are entitled to consideration. These contain almost every thing which are supposed to form the knot of difficulty, and prevent the accounting for the origin of Moral Evil. They have observed, "If the Lord is supremely good, and takes pleasure in the happiness of his creatures, he ought not to have made them capable of sinning; or, if he had, he should have watched over them for the prevention of the same, as he well knew, they would certainly commit sin in the circumstances in which he was pleased to place them." This, perhaps, is proposed as strong as the objectors would wish to have it.

First: This is grounded on a *supposition*, that God has no right to make any creature superior to passive matter, or inferior to his own nature: that it was wrong in him to bestow on the workmanship of his hands, such powers, as were most confis-

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tent.

tent with their state in the scale of life ; or, that after he had bestowed them, their action should have been restrained ; which, in effect, would have been the same as not to have given them at all. Mere matter is incapable of acting of itself, and so are all beings that have not an innate and free power of determining their own conduct ; and therefore, are not interested in either right or wrong, virtue or vice, good or evil : whatsoever is done by either, is neither meritorious nor punishable. Remove this supposititious basis, and the building falls. Secondly : That God should form rational creatures incapable of sinning, is, for aught we know, impossible, unless he was to give them infinite perfections, which cannot belong but to infinite subjects. To suppose a plurality of these is a contradiction, for there can be but one Infinite. Absolute perfection, in any respect, can belong to no created being. In whatsoever degree the powers of action and choice are given, they are liable in the field of trial, to proportional abuse. This shews,



as degree includes limitation, that all rational creatures in such a case, however exalted, are still exposed to the possibility of deviation. So that either God was not able to make any creatures inferior to himself, and superior to inert and passive matter, as to the ability of action, or he was. And that he was, methinks, no one will deny. Otherwise, the world of rationals may be but mere machines, not to act, but to be acted upon : at best, but a living race of curious automats, without responsibility, and incapable of trial. The immensity of things possible were open to the view of God, and whatsoever was the object of wisdom and love, justice and power, he was able to perform. Shall we dare deny then his right and ability, to create what beings he thought proper on a view of the whole ? To accuse him, for subjecting them to laws which were suited to their present and future well being ? We might just as well question his existence, or dispute his right to govern the universe.

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Again :

Again: The prevention of sin was *morally* impossible. An intervention on the part of God at the time they were going to transgress, would have took from them the power which made them responsible, and overturned the constitution of their nature. To restrain in some cases is to destroy; and compulsion is utterly inconsistent with liberty. Allowing we, by reason of hereditary depravity, by which our mental powers may be considerably enfeebled, are not *free* now in *all* our actions, we can only in strict equity be accountable for those wherein we are so. This we may presume to be the case, with our deviations from the strict rules of perfect righteousness, when they spring without the concurrence of our approbation and will, from natural infirmities over which we have no command. Howbeit, this makes us out not the less guilty, in contracted habits of sin, which we have voluntarily brought on. Guilt must attach itself to such habits, though their aptitude should resemble the vivacity of nature, and their inveteracy be immemorial.

immemorial. As to the *circumstances* of their situation, they were most agreeable to their rank, capacity, and design. They introduced no incumbent necessity on them to commit sin. Had they done this they would have had to lament their rigour, and in their inevitable consequence deplore the stern decree that subjected them to such a fate. He who wills a cause, must will also its *necessary* effects : and that, whether *such* effects be immediate, or the produce of a succession and combination of secondary causes, that have been operating for ages. The personal qualities of merit or demerit will not attach thereto, but must be traced back to the chief and sole cause, which willed their being and impressed them with such direction. If a stone in equipoise has a degree of inclination given to it either on one side or the other, its fall, let the consequences be many or few, is not deemed the subject of judicial inquiry, nor is it called to an account for yielding to what it had no power to resist. We never dream of punishing a passive substance,

when thrown into the air, for obeying the force of its own specific gravity. Neither do we blame the sun for not emitting its rays through opaque and impervious clouds; nor consider it as deserving censure, for being eclipsed by the intervention of the moon. And the reason is obvious; because each of them submit to, and obey without the power of choice, their respective and necessary laws. Such also is the case with the *unavoidable* actions of organized beings; though endued with speech, motivity, and understanding.

To say, that we are always determined by *motives*, and that the strongest in appearance *indispensably* fixes the choice and incites to action, is nothing but a refinement of the same doctrine. It is still *absolute necessity*, though in a metaphysical form. The motives which we cannot resist, be they natural or supernatural, divine or angelic, earthly, sensual, or devilish, have nothing in them moral or immoral as they respect us. The *freedom* of the mind  
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is the *alone* basis of responsibility. What equity would there be to give A *two* degrees of power, and place him in a state of trial, amidst circumstances where *three* only would enable him to stand? To preserve the appearance of equity, the power of resistance must be *equal* to natural inclination, the deception to which the subject is exposed, and the influence of both mental and sensible motives. If D impresses the mind A with *three* degrees of inclination, and A is not able to oppose thereto, either from involuntary or natural inability, but *two* degrees of resistance, the submission of A to the superior force of D is *necessary*, and exculpates A from every charge of evil connected with such submission; as much so, *ad normam rationis*, as if the force of D was in reality the square of its degrees. To make the subject of trial accountable at the bar of equity, its power must be free, and in a full and complete ratio to the real quantity of force it has to resist. This is the leading axiom of our moral creed. The bastion of virtue, the great hinge on which the subject turns.

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The apostle James hath explained the nature of Moral Evil, and the seduction of mankind, in a very clear and intelligible manner. *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man. But every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then, when lust, passion, or desire hath conceived, i. e. is admitted to form itself in, and take possession of the mind, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.—Sin is the transgression of the law, John: and is not imputed, when, or where there is no law. Paul. The natural equity of God constrained him to prescribe for the direction of his creatures such laws as were wise and just; such as were most proper for their state, and strictly calculated, by dutiful observance, to promote their individual and collective welfare. Therefore says the Psalmist, his law, statutes, and commandments are truth; they are pure, right, and perfect. And St. Paul, the law*  
 is

is *holy*, and the *commandment holy, just and good*. That is, they are consistent throughout, and unite to declare the faithfulness of the Lord, and the rectitude of his proceedings. They are free from error, and righteous in their demands. They are excellent and entire ; and founded on essential equity and goodness : and so suited to the nature and situation of reasonable beings, as to be expedient for, and beneficial to them. As is its Author, so is the law ; whether of nature, reason, or revelation ; being free from sin, and every sinful tendency. The laws of God are founded on the fitness of things, and suited to clear his conduct from every sinful imputation of Fatalists, Sceptics, and Infidels. *By the law is the knowledge of sin.* Paul. Therefore sin must consist in either the *transgression or neglect* of laws, known or capable of being known ; without which, there could be no state of probation—no breach or violation thereof whatsoever. We may rest assured, that God cannot require rational creatures to perform his will, when

destitute

destitute of its knowledge, and the means of becoming acquainted with it, together with adequate power, and favorable opportunity. Where these are wanting, the law is not obligatory. None are required to do impossibilities. *If there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*

“ If nothing more than *purpose*; in thy power,

“ Thy purpose firm is equal to the deed :

“ Who does the best his circumstance allows,

“ Does well; acts nobly ; angels could no more.”

The poor widow that threw her two mites with cheerful freedom into the treasury of the temple, was spoken of by our Lord with higher commendation, than those rich persons who cast in much out of their abundance. The parable of the fig-tree which yielded no fruit, and successively disappointed its owner ;—that of planting a vineyard, letting it out to husbandmen, and expecting to receive the fruits thereof when the time drew near ;—  
together



together with that of the distribution of the talents, returning to reckon for them, and bestowing rewards according to their use and neglect, are nearly in point, and illustrate this subject. The Lord is not a hard master, *he doth not expect to reap where he hath not sown, nor gather where he hath not strawed.* He hath declared, that if mankind *were blind*, unacquainted with, and unable to perform their duty, *they should have no sin.* John. There is a great deal of difference made between the sin of *ignorance* and that of *presumption*. Num. xv. 22—31. The former admitted expiation by sacrifice, but the latter brought on the penalty of death. *Therefore to him that knoweth to do good and doeth it not, to him it is sin.* James. That is, to him it is deliberate and wilful, aggravated, formal, and positive sin.

Moreover: It hath been said, "It would have been much better had the Lord withheld from rational creatures the powers of mental freedom, action, &c. than to have given

given them attended with such evils as arise from their misuse." What less is this than saying, the Lord ought not to have formed intelligible and moral agents, and that he had no right to govern and reward them? That he is an unkind Being for making them capable of abusing their power or retaining their integrity? It calls in question the divine understanding, and sinks it below the level of what he has created. It arraigns the equity of his proceedings, and insinuates that he was inadequate to the formation and government of rational beings. Whereas, to subject such to laws which were *wise* and *just* and *good*, and necessary to be observed for the promotion and security of their happiness—to guard such laws by suitable penalties and awful sanctions, in order to enforce their observance and preserve them inviolate, must be acts of kindness and regard, which deserve thankfulness and praise instead of censure. Therefore, to execute such laws and inflict their respective penalties on those who dare offend, cannot be properly termed

termed *injustice* or *cruelty*. This will apply as much, or more so, to delinquents under the gospel as to those under other dispensations, because, their light being greater their offences are attended with aggravated guilt.

This *objection* also deprives mankind of the capability of improvement, and the prospects of increasing felicity. What advantage should we reap by being insensible to both pain and bliss? From being related to the beasts of the stall, and like them to tread the dull round of life without even equal enjoyment? The present is a state of mixt happiness; of which in general, even as to physical good and its means, there is a surplus quantity in life, above that of misery. No injury, therefore, is done to any human creature by being introduced into it, but positive good; especially when the *probability* of its present increase is taken into the account, and the *certainty* thereof hereafter, if the part of such on the stage of life is discharged

in a proper manner. Why then should any think it right, to take from his fellow creatures who improve the talents either of nature, providence, or grace, entrusted to their care, the enjoyment of the blessings of life for the misconduct of the vicious? And the privilege of being candidates for future happiness, with the opportunity of securing it, because others *voluntarily* misuse the same gifts, and turn them to their own destruction? It is certain, that for the latter it would have been much better had they never been blest with either reason or liberty; but this is not a sufficient reason why others should be deprived thereof, because some wilfully misuse them. This indeed, would be to make the righteous suffer with the wicked, *Surely that be far from thee O Lord: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?*

Furthermore: It hath also been said,  
 “That the Lord’s knowledge of what  
 would come to pass, should have preven-  
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ted him from forming such creatures as he knew would sin." This objection, if it proves any thing, proves too much. viz. That the Lord is not able consistent with the purity of his nature and unlimited knowledge, to make creatures capable of sinning without being guilty of all the crimes they commit; and that the evils which have taken place in the moral world with the consequences thereof, being known to him, were altogether unavoidable. One observes,

" If *such* the world, creation was a crime ;

" For what is crime, but cause of misery ?

It objects also to the Lord's knowledge of what was, or was not *proper* to be created ; to the display of his unbounded wisdom and power in the formation of rational creatures designed for a state of probation : and supposes it would be better if there were no orders or degrees of being in the world ; and that every of his productions were of a mechanic nature, subject to laws

they could neither withstand nor resist.  
To such *objector*, I would say with Pope,

“ Go wiser thou ! and in thy scale of sense,  
“ Weigh thy opinion against Providence ;  
“ Snatch from his hand, the balance and the rod,  
“ Rejudge his justice, be the god of God.”

How amazingly men err, when they presume to reflect on, and fix a standard for the divine conduct ; as if depraved reason was superior to omniscience, and they were able to dictate to God. When some men are determined to gain a point and support an hypothesis, they pay but little attention to what make against them, and cast less on consequences. They would willingly make their idolized opinion like the golden image in the plain of Dura, or like Diana of the Ephesians whom all Asia and the world worshipped. Those who pull off the mask, find fault with the creation, question the equity of providence, and boldly lay sin at the door of God ; and those who treat Intellectual Freedom as a mere chimera, and believe all things are  
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under an absolute fatality, the predetermined and irrevocable order of which has an invincible influence in the production of all events, agree in fact, to support the same cause :—to blot out the line of truth, and trample on moral distinctions in domestic and civil life ; to undermine the foundations of jurisprudence, and indirectly to disregard religion, reason, and equity. Though to the honor of the latter, it must be acknowledged their agreement, in general, is more in opinion and inference than in moral practice ; for their conduct is often found to invalidate their sentiments, and contradict their opinion.

As the last *objection* appears to be founded on Divine *foresight*, I would add a few words thereon of explication. Either there is Moral Evil in the world, or there is not. If there is, which none are hardy enough *directly* to deny, there must be an essential difference between it and moral good ; otherwise, it would be the same thing to injure our fellow creatures as to do them

acts of kindness, and to blaspheme the name of God as to render him the honor which is his unquestionable due. The Lord therefore must invariably love, promote, and reward the one ; and also hate, oppose, and punish the other. This he has done, and still continues to do, by means which are both wise and just. Without this he could not be God, and without the power to comply with his will man could not be man. In *mere knowledge* there is nothing effective, it is not able to produce either substance or action, for it has no power, and therefore not immediately concerned in the free transactions of men. The Lord it is true knows how far and in what way they will be determined by moral motives and physical influence ; and it is absolutely impossible for him to be deceived in anything that respects them. It would be bold indeed to assert, that he cannot know the free and contingent actions of rational beings, because, we cannot fully conceive of and describe the manner. How is it possible we should, unless we could  
familiarize



familiarize his ability, and comprehend his being? The knowledge of God is commensurate with his nature; and as *this* is infinite, so must *that* be also. He is not like us, and consequently, may and must know things in some other way, beyond the reach of our thought, and infinitely more perfect. He has an immediate and complete intuition of all creatures that now are, that shall be, and that can be, together with their distinct natures and various relations; for there is nothing of which he is or can be ignorant:—this is all that can be properly understood by us of prescience, and indeed of omniscience. The *certainly* of this knowledge in God, (for the particle *fore* may be as well dropt here as used) is not founded on his irrelative and immutable decree, for then in point of order this must precede that; which would make him first decree in the dark, and afterwards to know only because his decree altered not. If his decree be admitted to arise from his knowledge, the point in question is conceded, for then it  
must

must respect all things as they are or shall be, that is, as they are contingent or necessary ; which makes the immutability of his decree become more just and reasonable. His wisdom entirely secures him from error, and his knowledge from being deceived ; the rectitude of his justice constrains him to do only what is right to all ; his faithfulness exempts him from any suspicion to the contrary ; and his goodness assures us, that he is infinitely merciful and kind. Incertitude of knowledge and priority of order, have nothing to do with the divine nature and perfections. However clear, infallible, and universal his knowledge, his ways and conduct in creation, providence, and grace are the same ; and also *wise, and just, and good.*

The all-comprehensive knowledge of God is a necessary perfection of his nature, and an absolute prerogative of Deity. His simple precognition *effects* nothing that comes to pass. Intelligent agents in a state of trial, are as free and elective as if their  
future

future actions were not known. They are not determined therein because known to God, nor is his knowledge dependent thereon, or the cause thereof. All it is concerned in, touching their lives and actions, is, to induce him to do every thing for them suitable to their state and condition ; or in other words, the Lord is inclined by his knowledge of all things, persons, and events both contingent and necessary, to do for them whatsoever is *just* and *right* to prevent sin, and induce them to fulfil their obligations ; that thereby they might enjoy the advantages of their state, secure their own happiness, and answer the end of their creation. And what has he neglected to do for them that ought to have been done ? What needful accommodation or enjoyment has he withheld ? Wherein has he proved himself improvident or regardless of the welfare of his creatures ? Consistency and order, mercy, equity, and truth attend upon his steps and mark the whole of his œconomy. The dispensation of his grace was not given to

destroy the liberty of the mind, but to correct, assist, and guide it in the choice of just, real, and lasting good. He has always treated man, not as a machine, but as a reasonable being. What powerful motives or act of mercy has he not used consistent with moral freedom, to prevent and rescue man from sin? How numerous the displays of love and terror in different periods of the world, to attain the same end? Compulsion only has been omitted. What can be conceived more forcible, without necessity, to restrain from vice and excite to duty, than the invitation and admonition, threatening and encouragement, warning, persuasion and entreaty of God himself. Every thing consistent with our nature and state has been done. Regard to, (and if I may so say) even solicitude for our welfare have been graven, not only upon the palms of his hands to shew his readiness and ability to assist us, but also upon his compassionate and thoughtful heart; and our walls of safety and defence have been continually before him. There-  
fore



fore he may justly say, as he did when he appealed to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah upon his conduct toward them, Judge I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard ; what could have been done more to my vineyard that I have not done ? *Isa.* Or as he did, when expostulating with the house of Jacob and families of Israel ; What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me, and have walked after vanity, and are become vain ? *Jer.*

Knowledge results from perception and understanding : if followed with choice, it becomes an act of the judgment ; yet, even then stands distinguished from the property of power. Known unto God are all his works, from the beginning of the world. *James.* His knowledge is eternal, and invariably the same ; it has gained no increase, nor suffered any diminution, since creation rose into being and was formed by his plastic hand. What occasion then has his *knowledge* for personal decrees,

decrees, when it is completely secured from error and always infallible? It is a popular mode of speech, and ascribed to God; but appears to be no more attached to him in a *literal* way; than examination and counsel, time and motion, human parts, passions, and actions, which, without any *real* correspondence or *actual* similitude, are often found in the scriptures and common language, to be used in the way of metaphorical substitution only. Taking the mention of his *decrees* to be really and positively the same in *kind* as the determinations of men, and making the will a distinct faculty of the mind and the principle of liberty, and that to belong to knowledge, which is the peculiar object of power, have produced much confusion and many useless arguments on the subject of Moral Evil. To argue from the knowledge we find in ourselves, which we obtain by the joint operation of matter and spirit in essential union, to that which is in God, is not just. Though we strip it of its imperfections and apply it to him in  
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an infinite degree, which is the usual and vulgar method, the case remains the same. There is no proportion of degrees between finite and infinite. To maintain such an idea is preposterous and absurd. No increase or repetition of any thing finite can make it infinite. The former *admits* of degrees, but the latter *excludes* them altogether. Can any finite property be infinitely extended? That which is created, complex and precarious, become self-existent, simple spirit and independent? We might as well talk of scarlet virtue, and material thought; of making the human soul an essential part of Deity, or taking its cubical dimensions.

The knowledge of God is not the same, in either kind or degree, as ours. We have no real or formal, direct or positive, entire or partial apprehension of this perfection, as it intrinsically exists in him. In itself, we may conclude it to be totally different to the nature of our knowledge, being without the use of animal spirits, the labour of the brain, thought and deduction; and

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like

like the essence in which it is inherent, altogether in reality above our finite conceptions. The method and manner of its operation must therefore be unknown to us. If the property of knowledge in God was the same in nature or kind with human knowledge, the future actions of free agents, which to our limited understandings are truly contingent and uncertain, would be, in an indefinitely less degree, the same to him also. But this cannot be the case. It is entirely different in *nature* and *operation*, to our *method* of thought and *power* of discernment. Being divine and supernatural, it is to us unknown and incomprehensible; and therefore, no one can truly and justly *prove*, that future contingencies are unknown to, and inconsistent with the pure and infinite understanding of God; of which we have no direct, real, or intrinsic idea. To reconcile divine foresight and human liberty is not more difficult, than to prove, the one certain and infallible, and the other needful to responsibility. To describe the nature, method, and special province of the former, we must  
first



first comprehend it ;—this we cannot ;—therefore, to us, it is a doctrine of faith. Of the latter we have certain and direct evidence in self-consciousness, to which this controverted point might be reduced, and by which it is easily determined. I have an innate power by which I can cease to drive the quill and transcribe my thoughts, and you to close the book and throw them aside on the groaning shelves of increasing lumber ; or to prosecute at discretion their perusal and examination. The like power to act or refrain from action, we enjoy in a variety of other cases ; and indeed, in all those in which we are accountable for our conduct. Hence we conclude, that notwithstanding the prevalency of vice, and all the Deity has done, man is still furnished with the awful power of self-determination, and that the arguments commonly deduced from the *knowledge* of God, which is vastly different and infinitely superior to the natural property in us, from whence the name is borrowed, are not to be admitted as applicable to or any way conclusive on the subject. From reason, therefore, let us pass on to revelation.

## CHAP. V.

*Objections drawn from Revelation answered ; —the natural evils of inferiority, correction, and punishment considered ; —partial evil in the moral world, illustrated by partial evils in the natural world ; —the cause, use, and design of the latter ; —their apparent irregularities adjusted by a final retribution.*

SAITH Jehovah of himself, *I form the light and create darkness ; I make peace, and create evil ; I the Lord do all these things.* Isaiah. And the prophet Micah, that the inhabitant of Maroth waited carefully for good ; but evil came down from the Lord. From which, and other passages of like phraseology, some who are perhaps a little interested in their endeavours to exculpate man, have drawn the hasty conclusion, and completed their reasonable *objections*, by adding, “ That the Lord from the concurrent testimony of scripture is, and must be, the author of all evil.”

evil." If the Lord is the author, whether by predetermination or otherwise, of *all* we term evil, either we are mistaken in what we have ocular proof and grievous experience of continually : or his own purity is sullied, and his justice stands impeached. If we are mistaken, there is no moral evil in the world, and like all who are gone before us, we labour under invincible error, without the means of knowledge, or the power to alter our confirmed judgment. What we conceive to be sin must be necessary good, and mankind have been alarmed in vain, and troubled about an imaginary Harpy, a frightful spectre of their own raising. To make God the author of sin, is contrary to interest and conviction. We should always be ready to vindicate his ways, and careful to maintain his honour inviolate. Can we suppose that he would determine man to evil, and throw off the guilt from himself? Or, that morality is all a farce, and that fate reigns uncontrolled in the throne of God? The truth is a middle term, and found between these

extremes. Heaven and earth, our senses and reason, cannot have conspired to deceive us. There is iniquity in the world. Whatever the Lord is the author of is not sinful. How proper then, to regard the difference between *natural* and *moral* evil, between that which lessens *sensitive* happiness, and takes from us created comfort; and that which renders us sinful, and injures our welfare as *rational* agents.

The scriptures declare, that *the Lord hath no pleasure in wickedness;—that his face is against them that do evil, and it shall not dwell with him;—that he will punish the world for their evil, and the wicked for their iniquity.* See page 38. How then can it be thought that he is the author of *all* evil? Is he the author of what he here condemns? Is he the enemy of his own productions; and doth he constitute the world wicked, and afterwards punish them for it? No, sirs, no. What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? What communion hath light with



with darkness ? What concord hath Christ with Belial ? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols.

That the Lord is represented in some parts of the inspired oracles as the author of evil must be allowed ; but he is no where spoken of throughout the whole, as the cause of Moral Evil or sin ; and therefore the evil that he is the author of, must be of a different kind. He himself sets this matter in a clear and proper light. In his command to Jeremiah to record his threatened judgments against Judah, we see their true origin, difference, and design. *It may be that the house of Judah will bear all the EVIL which I purpose to do unto them ; that they may return every man from his EVIL way ; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.* Here the evil of punishment is distinguished from the evil of sin. If the denunciation of the former meets with neglect and contempt, the Lord in his own time, and by such means as he knows to be best, brings on its infliction,

tion, in order to induce humility, repentance, and reformation, or punish sinners for their evil ways, that others may notice and avoid what made them the objects of his displeasure. There are several things considered as evil in which the Lord's hand is often seen; nay, there is scarce any calamity or affliction of either a private or public kind, that will not convince us of it, if we properly mark the cause, process, and issue. Among other things regarded as evil, we find dishonor, affliction, and judgment; poverty, temptation, and danger; darkness, age, and death. I shall confine myself to the consideration of the three first.

*Dishonor.* This respects the *situation* of individuals, families, and nations in the œconomy of providence. It will particularly apply also to the different *degrees* of being in the order of creation. Subordination supposes some superior to others, and therefore comparatively speaking, it is sometimes said, the inferior are imperfect, dishonourable,

dishonorable, or bad. This is not really or abstractedly true, and is a mode of speech to be understood with limitation. All are useful in their proper place, but not out of it; therefore Paul's similitude, when speaking of the church, is here in point, and very fitly illustrates the relation and dependence of each class or order of beings. *The body is not one member, but many:—the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again, the head to the feet, I have no need of you:* nay, much more those members of the body which seem to be more feeble, are necessary, even those which we think to be less honorable. So that we may fairly judge, all are properly arranged and adapted by the wisdom of God to ends both general and particular. None are deficient in what is requisite to their nature, condition, and design. All have what is useful and proper to their state, order, and degree; more would be superfluous, if not hurtful. There is no injustice done to those who are less perfect or inferior, nor have they a  
right

right to complain because they are not of a higher order ; for existence alone is better than to be sleeping for ever among the clods of the valley. God was not obliged to give more than he has given. All in a state of trial have many enjoyments, and the means of their improvement. If inferiority is comparative dishonor, it is abundantly overbalanced by the good bestowed. Yet, if there are any who will still complain, let the suitable reproof of the same writer be attended to. *Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say unto him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honor and another unto dishonor? In a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor and some to dishonor.*

As to the situation and external circumstances of individuals, families, and nations, they are regulated by the God of knowledge,



knowledge, according to their moral desert, or his just and sovereign will. The *rectitude* of his conduct is alike to all. He hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitations. Herein he acts as Creator, Proprietor, and Lord of all. His indisputable sovereignty, which is not subject to caprice, but regulated by his word, will, justice, and designs, prefers one person to another, as Jacob to Esau, and Cyrus to deliver his captive people; one nation to another, as Israel to the rest; and the seed of David for Christ to be born from. He often distributes his gifts as a sovereign benefactor, and in this becomes a respecter of persons. This election is founded on partial and distinguishing grace, and is the cause of various personal and national dispensations. We merit no favour at his hands, and therefore it is a mercy to be entrusted by him with *one* talent, whether natural or spiritual; whether of ability, station, influence, knowledge, or possession. Impartiality in grace is consistent with partiality in its degrees;—the  
creation

of a seraph with the formation of a man ;  
 —the choice of an individual with family  
 rejection ;—the dereliction of the Jews with  
 the call of the Gentiles ;—the general re-  
 demption of mankind with the particular  
 salvation of believers ;—the efficacy of di-  
 vine grace with human agency ;—the par-  
 tial knowledge of the truth and temporal  
 benefits with the final impartiality of  
 remunerative justice.

God, as moral Governor and Judge of all,  
 is no respecter of persons. This, when  
 contrasted with the former, affords us a  
 useful distinction. We may partake in the  
 partial advantages of temporal election,  
 and be justly thrown out in the impartial  
 election of the faithful. We are called to  
 be holy according to our own dispensation,  
 and not according to that of others. This  
 should induce us to give all diligence  
 to make our calling and final election  
 sure. By the covenant of works our  
 legal hope of eternal life is destroyed ;  
 but by the ministration of the spirit  
 and

and active faith we may labour in the vineyard of our respective dispensations, improve our talents, and through a *derived* merit from Christ, receive the rewards of evangelical obedience. Nations as nations existing only *here*, are dealt with accordingly; and therefore he bids states rise and fall, as virtue or vice abound.—Vide Jer. xviii. 1—11. But *not so* with individuals. The being of man doth not terminate here. This is but the porch—the infancy of existence; the momentary dream of life, wherein it is thrown as into shades and obscurely seen. Therefore, when we consider the conduct of the Lord towards man, we should take into our account a *future* state, which is properly a supplement to *this*; and then with unqualified submission we shall own and rest satisfied with his ways. Howbeit, *He maketh poor and maketh rich, he bringeth low and lifteth up. Promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south; he putteth down one and setteth up another. He poureth contempt upon princes, and*  
O *weakeneth*

*weakeneth the strength of the mighty. He increaseth the nations, and destroyeth them; he enlargeth the nations, and straiteneth them again.*

*Affliction.* The afflictions of individuals and families, may be said to consist in bodily pain and disease, spiritual distress, extreme indigence, and the like. These are often the fruit of sin, and varied with its commission. Particular sins have been followed with particular corrections, and general transgression with general chastisement. From the natural and political connection of the righteous and the wicked in this world, it cannot but happen, that the former sometimes partake of the evils due only to the latter. To prevent this would produce confusion in almost every department of life; miracles must be wrought daily, and the course of second causes occasionally interrupted or suspended.

Disease and calamity, with all perturbed variations of body and mind, subject us to  
 painful



painful sensations. Life to many abounds with perplexity. While we reside here, we shall, more or less, have to contend with anxiety and struggle with uneasiness. The friendly strokes of mutation which we are apt improperly to term severe, convince us, if attended to, of the uncertainty and insignificancy of all earthly concerns; of all pursuits that are bounded by time, and must end with the present state of being. But however painful our anxiety and tormenting our uneasiness may be, however the contingencies and trials to which we are exposed may wound our external peace, and affect the circumstances which we may wish to enjoy; yet, if reason is permitted to controul our wayward passions, and religion allowed to turn aside the veil of time, they will point us to the place, where the rude companions of our present state will cease and be unknown. *As the fining pot for silver, and the furnace for gold,* so is affliction for the trial of man. Lesser evils are in kindness sent to prevent greater.

We often lose a part of our common mercies

cies to teach us the value and use of what are left. Misfortune and affliction attend our steps, and are a part of the necessary discipline of our nonage. They are the voice of God, and discover to us the benefits of physical good, with the advantages of patience and resignation. They work together to promote in us a well-grounded hope of increasing glory.

“ These are not ills, else would they never fall

“ On heav’ns first fav’rites, and the best of men.”

The *end* of man should reconcile him to suffering and exertion, as *means* which tho’ often painful are useful and necessary. The winter is found to be as needful as the spring. The evils of life are but rarely inflicted as vindictive judgments, they are oftener the effects of fatherly correction. We have a remarkable instance of this in the person of Job. He, when afflicted could wisely say, in gentle reproof to his taunting consort, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive  
*evil?*

*evil?* He was sensible that the Lord was righteous in all his ways, and that his trying state was a time for patient submission. Great as his trouble was, he saw that justice might have inflicted worse. He was not yet consumed. The imperfect knowledge men have of the conduct of the Lord and the afflictive evils of life, is strongly depicted in the behaviour of Job's three friends. When they heard and saw all the evil that was come upon him, they accused him of secret sin, and told him the Lord was punishing him for his transgressions. They supposed, according to common opinion, that the greatest sinners were the greatest sufferers. But a slight attention to the events of life will prove the reverse; and if we retire with David into the sanctuary we shall there learn, that the Lord trieth the *righteous*, and many are their afflictions. That men are chosen in the furnace, and in their affliction acknowledge their offence, and seek his face. And also hear them confess, It was good for them to be afflicted, even for their

O 3                      profit,

profit, that they might be partakers of his holiness, and be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live. Here then we see the design and use of chastisement, which is to quicken and restrain, purge and purify; and cause those who are properly exercised by it, to enjoy the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Hence Moses prayed, Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen *evil*.

*Judgment.* As under affliction I spoke chiefly of instruction and advantage, here I would include also *vindictive justice*. The best and only sufficient guide to form our opinion by on this argument, is to be drawn from God's dealings with former nations in like circumstances. When individuals, families, and nations, have been far gone in iniquity and habitual sin, the Lord hath risen in his anger, and justly punished them with the marks of his displeasure. But this has never been till the trumpet has sounded the alarm of danger. Till he has  
declared



declared to them in some way or other, what they were to expect, unless they repented of their folly and amended their way. In judgment he remembers mercy, and enters upon his strange work with deep reluctance. *O Ephraim, O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? How shall I deliver thee Israel? How shall I make thee as Admah? How shall I set thee as Zeboim?* He is the God of love, and his tender affection yearns over the miseries of his creatures. No method that can be justly devised is left untried to reclaim and save them. He exacteth of them *less* than their iniquity *deserveth*. He calleth and stretcheth out his hand—he correcteth with the rod, and thundereth with his voice, before he openeth his armoury, and bringeth forth the weapons of his indignation. But how few discern and believe the signs of the times. None scarce discover the apprehension of approaching danger, or regard for the safety of themselves and others. Few under affliction are humbled for their  
sins,

fins, and acknowledge the mildness thereof  
 to be matter of grateful praise. When  
 every other method is exhausted with the  
 incorrigible, he hath recourse to judgment.  
 From him the destructive sword receives its  
 commission, as well as the noisome pesti-  
 lence, meagre famine, sweeping inunda-  
 tion, and the like ; by which he at times  
 renders vengeance to his enemies, and re-  
 wardeth them that hate him. He can use  
 the meanest creature as well as the conflic-  
 ting elements for the punishment of man.  
 The enjoyments of life under his hand may  
 become the means thereof, and contemp-  
 tible insects a fore and grievous scourge.

Of such evils as the foregoing Jeremiah  
 spake, when he said, The Lord hath a  
 controversy with the nations ; he will plead  
 with all flesh ; he will give them that are  
 wicked to the sword. Behold, *evil* shall  
 go forth from nation to nation, and a great  
 whirlwind shall be raised up from the coasts  
 of the earth, and the slain of the Lord shall  
 be at that day from one end of the earth  
 even

even unto the other. When Israel forsook the Lord and did wickedly in his sight, despised his ordinances and bowed down to Baal and Ashtaro<sup>th</sup>, his anger waxed hot, and his hand was against them for evil. He delivered them into the hands of spoilers that spoiled them, sold them into the hands of their enemies round about, and they were greatly distressed. Judg. comp. Amos iv. 6 to ult. with ix. 1—10. The writing of the prophets, the lesser in particular, are replete with threatened judgments for sin; and events have awfully verified their bold and alarming predictions. Though the Lord is slow to anger, he is great in power, and will not at all acquit the wicked. Saith he by Isaiah, to rebellious Israel; I will number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: *because* when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear, but did *evil* before mine eyes, and did *choose* that wherein I delighted not. And when their posterity had multiplied their evils, done worse than their fathers, and outraged his patience;

he

he arose in the fierceness of his indignation and said, Pray not for this people, I will not accept them; but I will consume them by the sword, and by the famine, and by the pestilence. Jer. They were judicially punished for their sinful ways by calamity and destruction: their strong holds were thrown down, Jerusalem was trodden as in a wine press, and all their pleasant places were laid waste. Sacred and profane accounts abound with personal and national instances of this kind. The history of the world is but little more than a narrative of its transgression and punishment. Therefore, the prophet Amos may justly ask, Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it? Read Deut. xxviii.

From what has been said on dishonor, affliction, and judgment, we may gather just ideas of the evils the Lord is the author of. He as a Father chastens men for their benefit by pain, disease, and the like, to awaken them from security, and wean them from the world, alarm conscience, and put them



them on their guard; prevent sin, and purify the heart; reclaim the vicious, and establish the faithful; brighten their graces, and prepare them for glory. But when he punishes with judgment, it is to fulfil his word, and satisfy the law; vindicate his injured honour, and recompence sin; check the torrent of impiety, and overawe a degenerate world; restore moral order, and show, that though hand join in hand the wicked shall not go unpunished. And though the same temporal evils, at times, befall the righteous and the wicked, to the one they are a *profitable mixture* of afflictions and grace; but to the other, the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out *without mixture* into the cup of his indignation.

To illustrate still further the difference between the evil of sin and that of punishment, let us briefly notice, the design and service of the natural and apparent irregularities in material nature. The very things which we from the imperfection of our knowledge

knowledge termed grievous accidents and consider as evil, are often the reverse ; and not so much the product of sovereignty as of goodness. He brings them about by his immediate power, or the agency of some of his creatures ; by which he can shape and direct their ends to the furtherance of his designs. Dark and heavy clouds are not unfrequently fraught with rich and positive blessings. All things serve his righteous will and sovereign pleasure. The warring elements support the world. The parts of nature which appear to be destructive to each other, and charged with antipathies in their course and operation, are but partial evils, which are ultimately attended with real and general advantage. Fire and hail,—snow and vapour,—blasting and mildew,—thunder and earthquake,—tempest and storm, fulfil the word of the Lord, who maketh use of their agency. Their partial irregularities are directed by him, to promote the welfare of their own system, and benefit of the universe. To instance only in the latter.

This

This seemingly disordered state of the air, is the effect of divine power, wisdom, and goodness. All creatures depend on him, and of course the *necessary* effects of their being. These proceed from the order and connection of second causes, and those laws of matter and motion which are established and preserved by God. By the violence of stormy wind he is honored and obeyed; clouds are waisted abroad and the earth timely refreshed with rain; swarming insects destroyed, and the air rendered wholesome; the ill effects of a fixed and contagious state thereof corrected or prevented; and vegetation, respiration, and nutrition benefited; and above all, mankind excited to fear and love, depend on and gratefully adore him who bringeth the wind out of his treasures, and hath his way in the whirlwind and in the *storm*. As it is in the natural world, so also is it in the moral. For, as the effects of such natural causes are sometimes partial evils, though of particular and general benefit to material nature; so also are the afflictions of God

in consequence of moral depravity attended with the like, though suited to promote the individual and general welfare of rational beings. Now I would not be understood to mean here, that Moral Evil is as necessary to the perfection of the moral system, as such natural evils are to that of the universe, as some ethic writers have imagined; but only, that in the present depraved circumstances thereof, physical and partial evils answer under the direction of the Lord the like purpose in the moral world. This, perhaps, is the strongest reason why such natural evils are continued among and inflicted upon mankind; and very properly discovers to us his wisdom and goodness, in what is deemed the most inexplicable part of the subject; acquits him from the charge of being the author of sin, and justifies his conduct in the permission thereof.

I may now expect it to be urged, "If the Lord acts for the general good of his moral creatures, and the natural evils which  
both



both good and bad are subject to, have the tendency above spoken of, all things must be according to the counsel of his own will, and as he himself would wish to have them." That afflictive evils are adapted to the profit and advantage of rational beings, is readily allowed ; but it can by no means be admitted, that *all* things are in their due order, and as he would have them to be. If so, Moral Evil must be as useful and necessary to promote the good of the whole, as such penal exactions are to rectify mankind, and advance their happiness : which is altogether unreasonable, for Moral Evil can neither be useful nor necessary. The actions of free agents must proceed, as such, from themselves, otherwise they would escape moral censure, from not being free. This would be to call evil good and good evil ; put darkness for light and light for darkness. Beside, what propriety would there be in the Lord's taking such a method for the perfection of his works ? Are the means superior to their Author ? Or, the sinful irregularities of

the creature more consistent with and perfective of the general benefit, than the complete order and consummate happiness first established? If so, what shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? If my unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, and if his truth hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? Paul. I leave this for the shrewd objector to answer on his own principles, if he can.

Again: The Lord hath declared of such as do evil that good may come, their damnation is *just*. And can it be that he approves of what he has so positively condemned? If he had rendered mankind unavoidably subject to Moral Evil for the perfection of the moral world, which implies a contradiction, he must be the author of sin, though the issue should on the whole be advantageous. But what a mean idea, doth such a thought convey of the divine  
 œconomy

œconomy in both creation and providence? It is incumbent on those who receive and assert it, to free their favorite doctrine of optimism from this inadmissible consequence, and not only vaunt on their fancied eminence, and repeat at every turn, *whatever is, is right*, and that sin itself is but *seeming evil*, from which divine agency is constantly educing the highest good; but to descend and prove how vice can be intrinsic virtue, and the whole moral *errata* of intelligent agents to be absolutely right. This done, I should as readily subscribe to their creed as transcribe and oppose to it the much more qualified and rational sentiment,

“ All, all is right, by God ordain'd, or done.”

To make Moral Evil as necessary as natural to advance private and general good, and conceive the *present* order (or rather disorder) of things to be as it came from the hand of God, and the very best possible, is somewhat like that other com-

mon but fallacious opinion to which it is related, that divine conservation is the act of creation continued. They are nearly equal in celebrity, but unfortunately for their truth, not being restrained to the universal state of things as it was at first, they tend, by fair inference, to either explode the existence of Moral Evil, or prefer a bill of indictment against the Supreme Being, which ought to be thrown out of the court of reason by all who have any respect for his honour, perfections, and consistency. We have the highest assurance of his rectitude, and the plenitude of his power secures his conduct from the slightest suspicion of any thing improper or unjust. Immorality is contrary to his nature, and must proceed from the misconduct of free and created agents alone; but the attendant evils thereof, of which from the union and operation of secondary causes, he may be considered as the Author, are as necessary for its correction, as medicine is for the removal of bodily diseases, or rather, as the grateful vicissitudes of night and day are to the benefit of mankind. Further-



Furthermore : The afflictions common to the righteous with the wicked, in the seemingly promiscuous distribution of natural evil, have been turned into an objection to the equity, and indirectly, to the subsistence of a particular providence. Say they, "No man knoweth either love, or hatred, by all that is before them; all things come alike to all, and there is one event to the righteous and the wicked." This, among the considerate, has been a matter of inquiry in all ages. It has given occasion to a vast variety of puerile thoughts and extravagant notions on the order and end, with the care and management of all created beings. This will ever be the case when men leave useful and experimental pursuits, to make the circuit of universal nature, and attempt to describe the secret influence of Divine agency by which it was first formed, and by which its laws continue to operate independent of them, and without being submitted to their charge or direction. The doctrines which relate to the providence of God, are of particular  
and

and universal importance ; and more clearly seen and known in the affairs of material nature, than in those of nations ; and more so in respect of these, than in those of individuals. His government is founded on his power ; and from his perfect acquaintance with all things, as they exist in themselves and relations, he invariably determines for the best. In him we live, and move, and have our being. All things are upheld by the word of his power. Nothing can escape the notice of his eye. The course of nature is disposed by his unerring counsel ; and maintained according to its own admirable laws. With regard to Nations, they yield to his almighty hand, which describes their bounds, and by concurring circumstances often shapes their proceedings to issue in ends other than designed ; by which good is often extracted out of evil, and their ascension or declination brought about. The natural laws and secondary causes to which all creatures are subject, depend on his appointment, and without his continual influence

influence would cease to operate and exist in their present order, if not retreat into nonentity. He rules as supreme Governor over material systems and civil affairs by general laws, which he never suspends or deviates from but for some wise and important purpose.

A general Providence must include a particular one. The Lord is not an Epicurean god at ease, and so taken up in the enjoyment of his own happiness as to have abandoned the universe to the government of any ruling genius, tutelar power, or created causes; without being engaged in its regulation or the concerns of humanity. His dominion is spiritual and special, as well as secular and national. It concerns, not only his servants, but his enemies also. In the temporal affairs of life the actions of both are often restrained, disposed, or over-ruled contrary to their expectation, in order to promote the establishment and increase of religion in the heart and life of man. Divine and human agency are often joined ;

joined ; but the rules of his conduct, with its occasional grounds, surpass our conception ; which should induce us to be extremely wary in forming a judgment on providential occurrences. These frequently appear to thwart or reverse each other ; and make different means effect the same end, and the same means to be the occasion of different ends. Nevertheless, all bodies, vegetables, animals, &c. are adapted to particular as well as general ends ; as we may observe in their established and provisional laws, formation and diversity, order, parts and uses : and surely if the obvious phænomena of natural things evidence so much, we may rest assured, that God in the administration of human affairs must regard persons and things as being what they are ; and of course, provide for and superintend even *particular* cases, so as to cause them to have, in the great drama of nature, a reasonable issue.

The temporal circumstances of men afford but little ground to determine and appreciate



appreciate their true characters. But as  
 these powerfully influence the mind of  
 most, so they bias and pervert the judg-  
 ment; and by a strange infatuation, vice  
 is generally attached to poverty, and virtue  
 to wealth. If our existence was bounded  
 by the present state of being, these might  
 be admitted to form a just criterion; but  
 since it is not so, and the reverse is well  
 known to be often fact, we should consi-  
 der ourselves as under the regimen of a  
 wise and just Being on whom we inces-  
 santly depend, who cannot be mistaken,  
 and who doth all things well. No cir-  
 cumstance is so trivial as to escape his no-  
 tice, and no action so indifferent but will  
 be weighed by him in the impartial balan-  
 ces of truth, and adjudged accordingly at  
 that period when we shall return and dis-  
 cern between the righteous and the wicked.  
 It is certain, that at present we do not al-  
 ways know the one from the other, nor can  
 we fully estimate the happiness or misery  
 of different men, with the real proportion  
 of their degrees. We see but through a  
 glass

glass darkly, and are subject to error ; know nothing of the disposition of the heart which determines the character, and are without foresight. But this we know, that every moment of time, with every thought, word and action, take the side of either one or the other ; and that true religion can make no one ultimately happy.

Now, allowing the *objection* its full force, and to be at present true, though many instances might be adduced from the Bible, from history, and from experience to the contrary ; there is no sufficient cause for good men to complain, because the wisdom and equity (to say nothing of the kindness and love) of the supreme and universal Lord, will not suffer things to remain always as they are. He is not unrighteous to forget their work and labour of love. Their devotional exercises and attachment to him, to his cause, and to his people, give them reasonable ground to expect a change for the better ; and from the exceeding great and precious promises secured  
and

and made over to them, they have a comfortable and certain assurance that the evils they suffer here, being events under the control of God, will issue either in this state or another to their lasting advantage.

The present state is not designed to be wholly exempt from sorrow: for our senses, relations and concerns continually administer thereto, and are made useful to remind us that *here* we have no continuing city—that this is not our rest, because it is polluted. We are pilgrims travelling through the valley of life, in which we have to pass the ordeal of affliction in some shape or other; as being attendant on the fall, and as such the *accident* of our being. No one has a right to expect an exemption therefrom; and as Christ himself passed the same road, his followers in particular, who are more exposed than others, should endure the cross with fortitude, and tread in his steps with cheerfulness. Afflictions, though not joyous, are designed for our profit in this state of warfare; and that to

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try, strengthen, and give lustre to the grace of faith, courage, patience and hope. It is becoming all who are exercised thereby, to labor to be resigned under every such dispensation, knowing that the Lord is righteous, wise and merciful; and that whatsoever they may suffer in *this* life, cannot equal their desert as finners; that though trials abound, their consolations much more abound; that the way to Canaan, is through the wilderness; and that all things shall work together for their good.

When vice is seen to be crowned with affluence, and revelling at the board of luxury with dimpled mirth; whilst conscious virtue is attended by the trembling steps of meagre want, and shedding the tear of sorrow in her naked cell, no one can possibly doubt but this life for such must have reference to another, as being the means only and not the end. From the inequality of temporal blessings, with the poverty and distress of religious virtue, we may fairly infer the immortality of the soul,  
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with the reason and certainty of a future state. Without these, numberless cases in human life would appear to be neither reasonable nor just; but when duly considered, their appearance is reversed; we no longer glide down the current of vulgar opinion, nor conceive physical evils to be without reference and design. No one can be strictly said to be unhappy, whose present and future enjoyments infinitely exceed all his present sufferings and distress. Though the latter should endure for the right of life, they are but of short duration, for joy will assuredly come in the morning. The humble and persevering christian finds, even now, at every stage of his journey suitable provision and accommodation; and whilst he bends the knee in grateful and devout acknowledgment for the mercies he has been furnished with, and the ground he has safely past over, he finds the incidents of life to quicken his desires for a better country, towards which he continues to walk by *faith*, not by sight. This militant grace is found needful from the

first step in religion, to that when the harness shall be put off;—from the time we enter the lists and start in the christian race, till we reach the goal and receive the prize. As accompanied with salvation, it points the believer to Christ as its author and finisher; and helps him to discover with the servant of Elifha at Dothan, that he is within the limits of his fold, power, and providence. By it he is enabled to rise, in holy superiority, over the sinful maxims and pursuits, contempt and applause of a changing world; to meet frowning adversity without extreme dejection, or anxious despair; and sustain the pressure of affliction with noble equanimity and unshaken peace. And as united with cheerful *hope*, to recline on the stable pillar of immortal truth; survey and embrace its distant promises; and patiently wait, as well as firmly expect the mandate of release, when, like the captive exile, he shall hasten that he may be loosed. The mists which hung over and obscured this part of the divine providence, and rendered the events of

human life dark and perplexed, are all dispelled by the unerring light of revelation. A final retribution unties the knot, and happily explains the whole. It opens a pleasing *vista* into the other world, and corroborates the many natural proofs of a future and better state; which so accords with our notions of hope, fear, and the like, is so reasonable for the government of our lives, and so necessary for the vindication of a particular providence, that all nations have admitted and believed it under some representation or other.

*Let us bear the conclusion of the whole matter:—Fear God, and keep his commandments; for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.* Borne on the sacred pinions of its firm belief, we may distance time, and hasten to the place where the rapid wheels of his flaming chariot shall be struck off; take our stand as on the verge of both worlds, and realize

the discoveries of that awful period. The present is but the bud of being, and the dawn of day. The time of the restitution of all things will unfold the bloom of perfect existence; and make known the rectitude of Deity, with the universal beneficence and justice of his proceedings. Then the mask will be torn from every face, and their certain characters be completely known. The unutterable glories which await every faithful soul will be displayed before them; and the afflicted righteous, of whom the world was not worthy, amply compensated for their patience and faith, fortitude and perseverance. Tribulation and distress, which was the painful post assigned them in this state of deception, conflict and danger, shall be then exchanged for the wreath of truth, celestial joy, and a mansion near the eternal throne. Though they should have appeared to *set* in shades, and their end to be without honour, they shall *rise* clear as the sun on a morning without clouds, to shine forth; with increasing lustre, in the kingdom of  
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their Father for ever and ever. But, painful thought!—the reverse for multitudes, alas! how certain. The incorrigible and finally impenitent who here drank deep of intoxicating vice, revelled in wanton excess, and were clapped in their giddy round by noisy adulation, will be then convinced of their irreparable mistake about men and things, when the time of vintage is come; when inexorable Justice shall command the ready angel to thrust in his sharp sickle, gather the clusters of the vine of the earth, and cast both it and them into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. Here I must drop the curtain; and close the whole with a truth which ought to be impressed on every heart, and written in plain characters on all the walks of man: *As righteousness tendeth to life; so he that pursueth evil, pursueth it to his own death.* Sol.

FINIS.

# ERRATA.

Page 14, line 2, r. which. P. 24, l. 13, r. visive. P. 25, l. 23, r. And. P. 37, l. 14, r. irrelevant. P. 39, l. 12, r. good. P. 47, l. 7, r. renounce, contest. P. 50, l. 1, r. works. P. 56, l. 16, r. we. P. 98, l. 2, r. affections. P. 100, l. 25, r. covenant. P. 106, last line, r. active. P. 111, l. 8, r. Seneca. P. 124, l. 24, r. itself. P. 135, l. 26, add, believe and. P. 132, l. 4, r. intelligent. P. 165, l. 10, r. writings. P. 167, l. 22, after natural r. evils. P. 168, l. 1, r. term. P. 169, l. 25, r. inflictions. P. 180, l. 8, r. unhappy.



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